CEREBUS
MELMOTH
THREE
$2.25 USA • $2.75 CANADA • £1.25 UK
142
JAN

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Fellow wrote and asked me a while ago why it is that I never address the "pressing problems of the day". Probably because I don't see them as problems. Most of them are just opposing quirks (ie. we say that unemployment is a problem at the same time we are replacing people with machines; we say overpopulation is a problem but we let anyone who wants to have a baby). With opposing quirks all you can do is shrug and soldier on as best you can.

We're afraid of death which is a lot like being afraid of exhaling or falling asleep. You *will* breath. You *will* fall asleep. You *will* die. We've eliminated or curtailed virtually every known cause of death. 'Cancer can be beaten' but death is still inevitable. Do you know anyone on the planet we can't do without? There *isn't* anyone. We are *all* perfectly expendable. The last one you could even make a case for was Albert Einstein, and after E=MC2 we'd already gotten out of him the best that he had to offer. If all the AIDS patients died tomorrow there wouldn't even be a hiccup in the history books. If all the people with blue eyes died tomorrow we'd still be drastically overpopulated. I love, by the way, the Anarcho-witch-feminist argument against overpopulation; that if everyone in the world turned 'vegomatic' tomorrow we could support ten times the population we have now. I swear those broads won't be happy until the whole planet looks like one big Woodstock festival (minus any music or loud talking for fear we'll "wake the babies").

Check the news, man. Any night. "Twenty die in India bus catastrophe." Twenty people. Like, we won't somehow muddle along without twenty Indians ... or Mexicans ... or Canadians ... or Germans. Where is our fucking sense of proportion? Scour a globe with 5.3 *BILLION* inhabitants and the best you can turn up is twenty dead. If everyone lined up on the Saudi border died in the first day of fighting it would still only be a drop in the bucket. One million dead. Two million.

Childbirth is *not* a miracle. Life is *not* sacred. When you have twenty-thousand nomads huddled between two rivers in the Middle East and that's it for Homo sapiens; when one in five children is a live birth, one in ten living past the age of ten, *then* childbirth *is* a miracle and life *is* sacred. When the average age of a grandmother in Philadelphia's housing projects is twenty-five, to call childbirth a miracle is at the least a tasteless joke and at worst a true obscenity.

We can feel the pressure building when we dare to look at it. "All you need is love" must have tickled Thanatos to his ice-cold, moss-covered, maggot-ridden heart. We find ourselves in a "Life Out of Balance" circumstance of boggling proportions. If there *is* transmigration of souls, everyone who *ever* lived on this planet *ever* is back here right now. Death is not fooled. We haven't eliminated Him. He is very, very, very, very, patient.

You know what I think happens when the last soul emerges again from some goo-gooing, placid, beatific anarcho-witch-vegetarian so that there's no more souls to draw on? I think its happened before in the distant past. Several times. On that day (I believe) we can all go out to the graveyard and watch the gray blue fingers pushing up through the sod; coming for us; for *all* of us. I think that's where those stories come from; and they only become popular when the time is near. *Very* near.

"Pressing problems of the day".

"Newspaper, radio and TV ga-ga", because nobody will just buy the advertising.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Ah, I probably don't believe half of that. The other half is still worth thinking about, though. Don't you think?

CEREBUS

NO. 142 JANUARY 1991

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MELMOTH
a short story

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(Cerebus 139 to Cerebus 150)

nx_Scanz_HaCsA !!!

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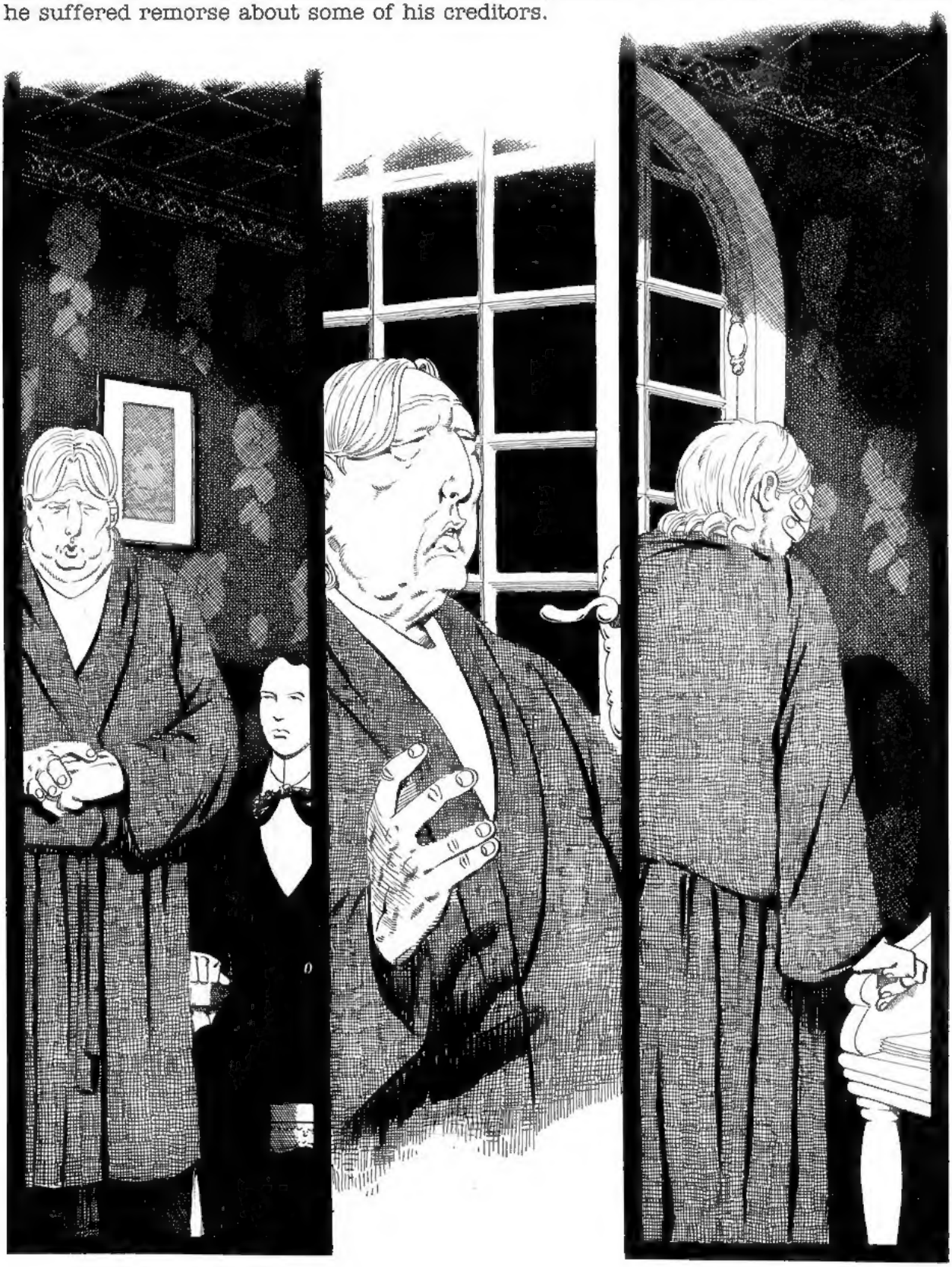
On going to see Oscar later in the day I found him very agitated. He said he did not want to know what the doctor had told me. He said he did not care if he had only a short time to live, and then went off on the subject of his debts which I gather amounted to something more than four hundred crowns. He asked me to see that at all events some of them were paid if I was in a position to do so after he was dead; he suffered remorse about some of his creditors.



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MUNCH
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GULP!
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GULP

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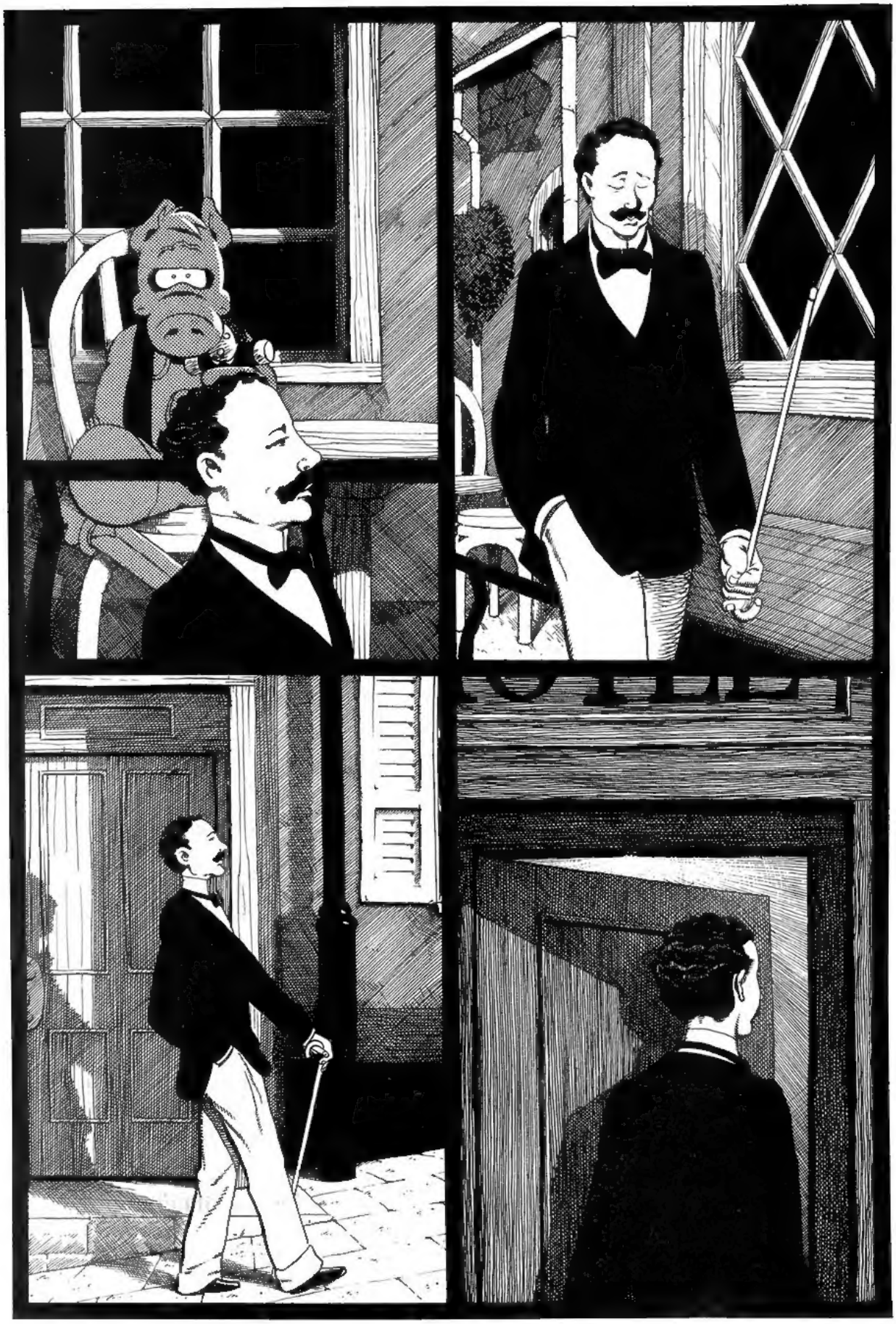

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Reggie made a very typical response.

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MY DEAR OSCAR
YOU WERE PROBABLY THE LIFE AND SOUL OF THE PARTY.
This delighted Oscar, who became high-spirited again, almost hysterical.
I left feeling rather anxious.

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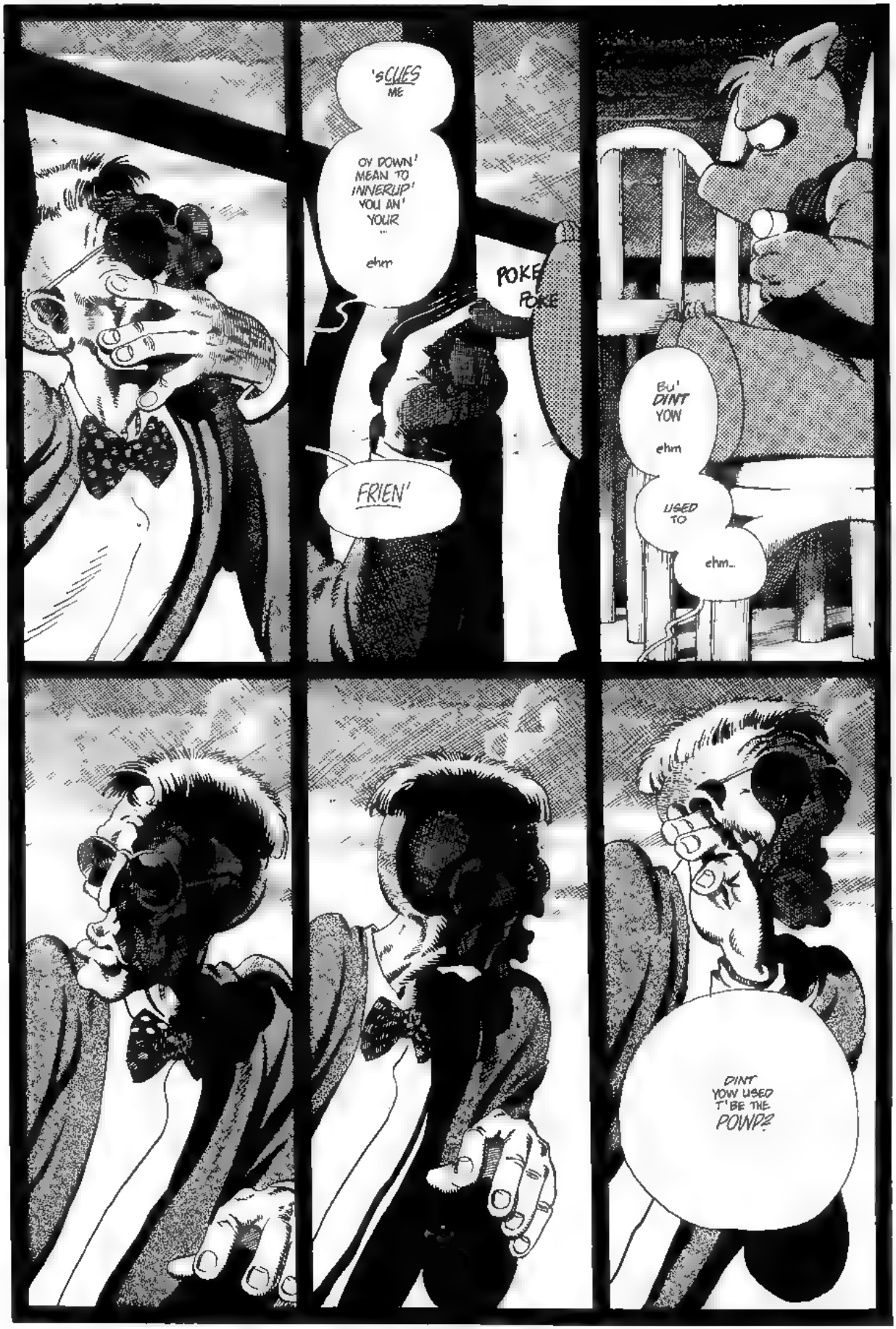
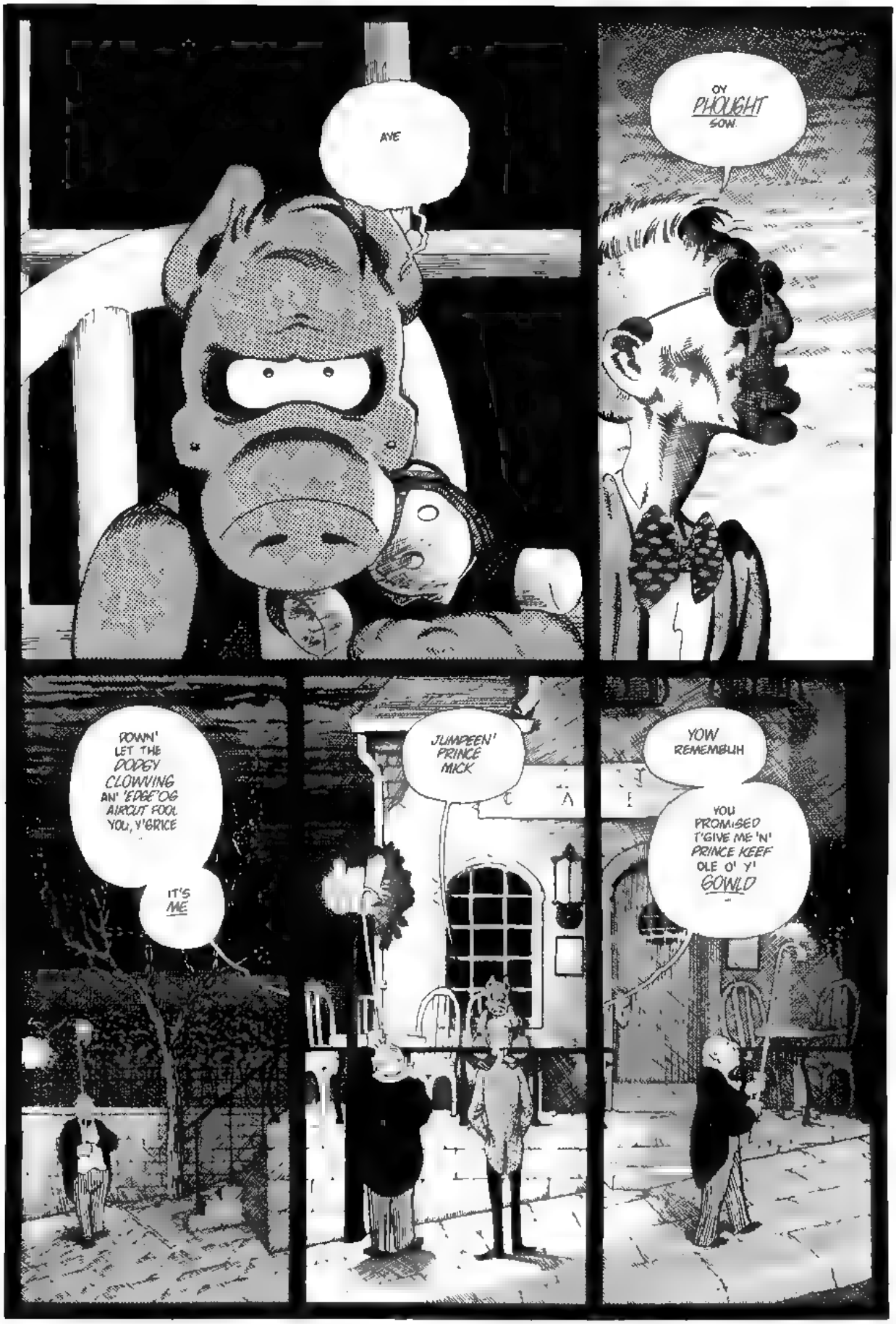
BLIMEY!


'sCUES ME
OV DOWN' MEAN TO INNERUP' YOU AN' YOUR ...
ehm
POKE POKE
FRIEN'
BU' DINT YOW
ehm
USED TO
ehm..
DINT YOW USED T'BE THE POND?


AYE
OY PHOUGHT SOW.
DOWN' LET THE DODGY CLOWNING AN' 'EDGE'OG AIRCUT FOOL YOU, Y'GRICE
IT'S ME
JUMPEEN' PRINCE MICK
YOW REMEMBUH
YOU PROMISED T'GIVE ME 'N' PRINCE KEEF OLE O' Y' GOWLD

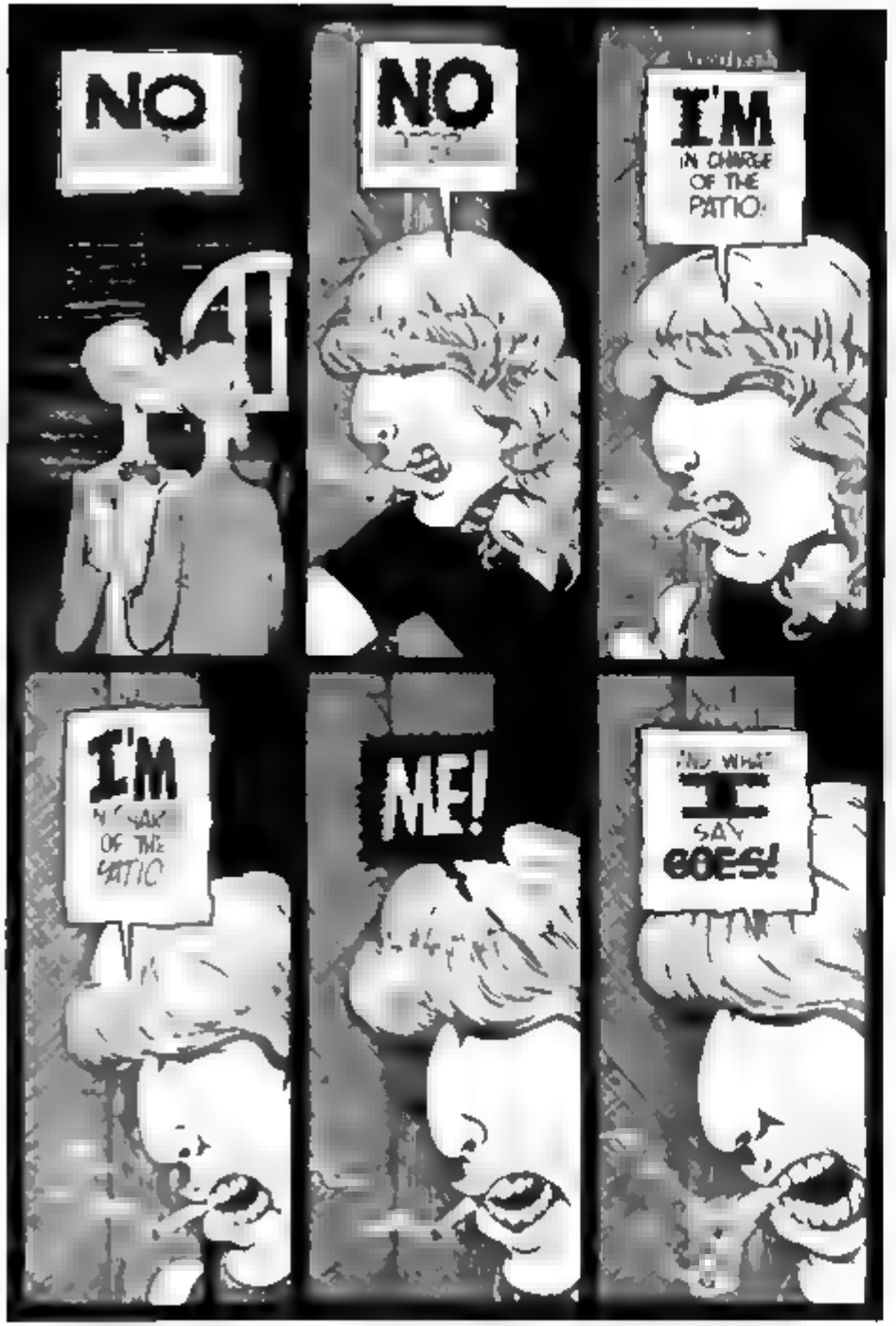
ZAT STILL ON THE HAT
AH
WHAT JUST LOOK A HUMAN
AH
WHY
TOOK IT ALL

OY PHOUGHT YOWDA BEEN NICKED BOY NOW..
YOU NOW
ARRESTED
THEY GOT OL' KEEF THEY DID
" TWO YEARS 'ARD LIE-BAH" F'--

WE-WW.
F'BEIN' KEEF BAYSIGLY
OWLDE KING DAD SED 'E WOULDN'T GOW BAYLE UNLESS WE AGRIDE T MARRY TH' BUTTOCK SISTUHS
SOW IT'S BACK T'TH' T'CAPTWIN KING-DOMS FER US -- AN' A LOIFE O' 'WEDDED BLISS'
SIGHE

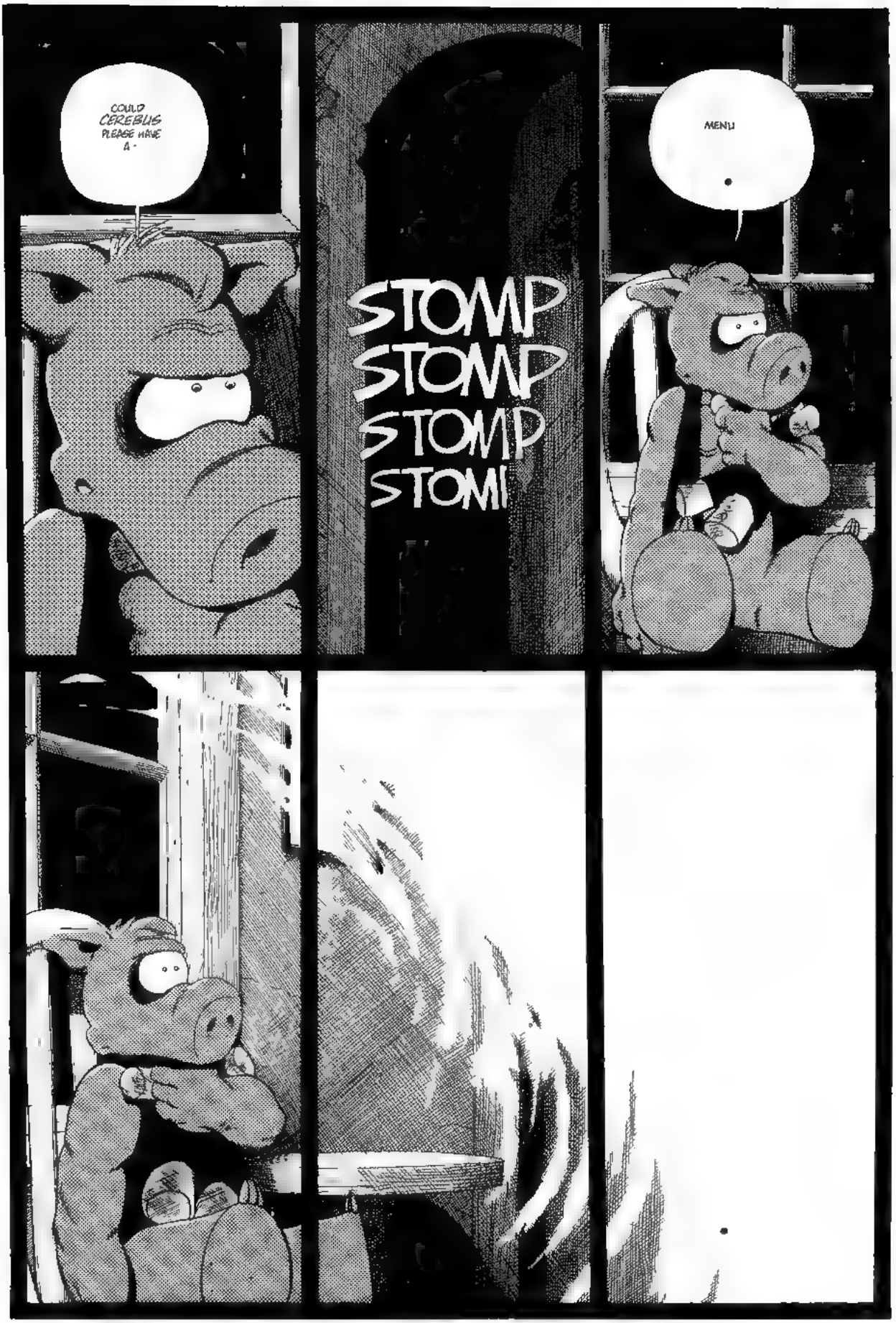
SOW WHEY WERE YOW WHEN SHE TOOK Y'GOWLD
ON THE MOON
LUCKY SOD.
KEEP N' OY 'AVE FOUN OUR SEWVES REDOUSED T' CHUG A LUGEEN COURGH REMEDIES

SPEA O' TH' DEVIL
ALLO KEEFER
Y'GET TH' ENGIGEMENT REENGS, THEN?
EVIDEN LY VEY DOWN' MIKE EM IN BUTTOCK SISTUH SOIZES
SOM OY DROPPED BOY A PLUMBEEN SUPPOLOY STO'E
AN GOT A NOICE ASSOR MEN FER 'ARF A CROWN.
YEAH
ONE OF VESE'LL DOWN DA TRICK

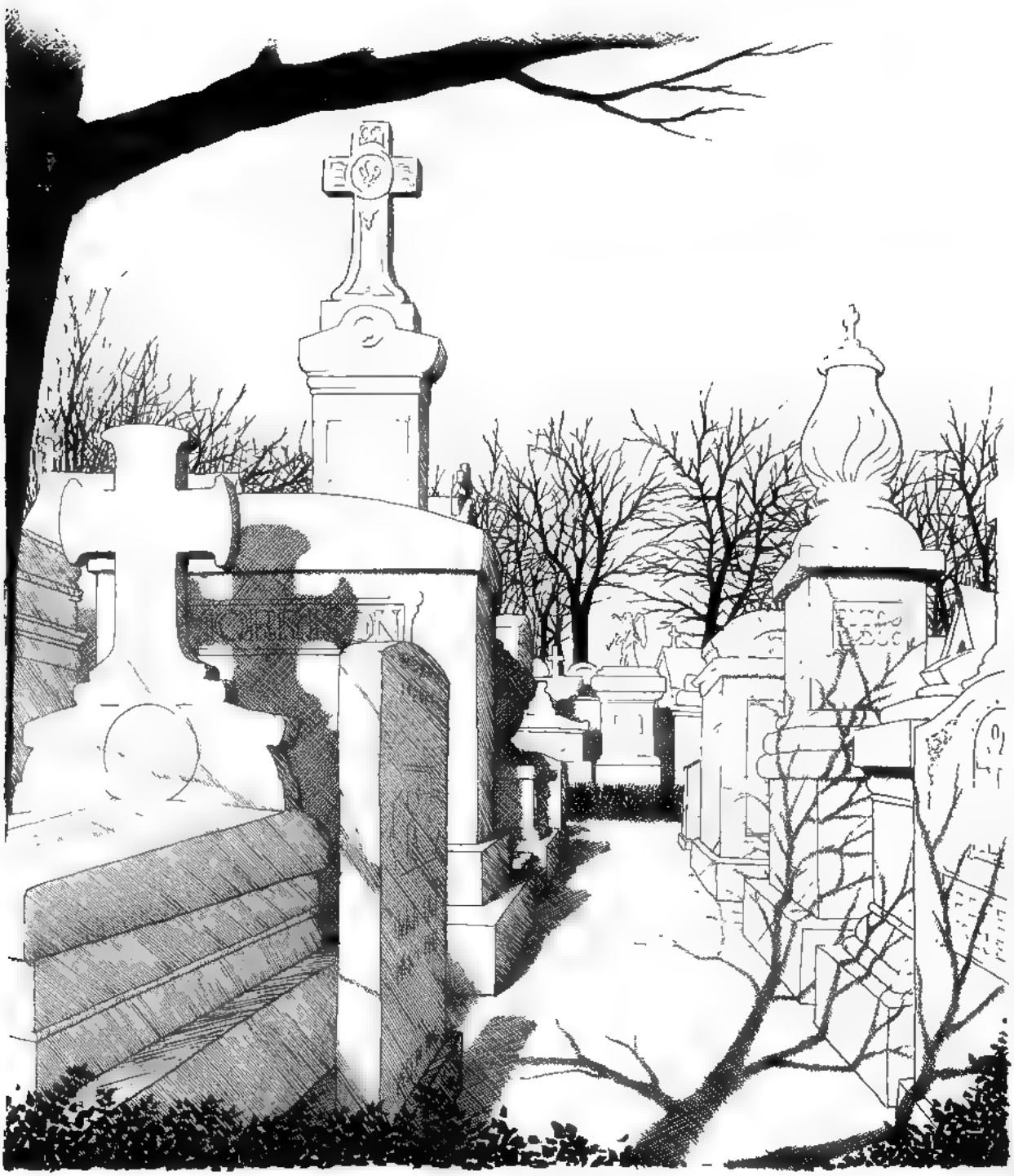

NO
NO
I'M IN CHARGE OF THE PATIO!
I'M
ME!
AND WHAT I SAY GOES!

I SAY
NO LOITERING NO LOITERING"
OUT
NOW
I'LL
GUARD
SHE'LL ARREST BOTH OF YOU

OY EXPEC' WE'LL BE MOVVIN' ALONG THEN
'SGOW, KEEF
'ERE!
"SHE'S THE BOSS"
AYE?


COULD CEREBUS PLEASE HAVE A -
STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP
MENU

That night I wrote to Douglas saying that I was compelled to leave Iest, that the doctor thought Oscar very ill, and hoped someone might be found to pay some of his bills as they worried him very much and the matter was retarding his recovery — a great point made by Dr. Tucker. All Soul's Day, I had gone to Père Lachaise Cemetery. Oscar was much interested and asked me if I had chosen a place for his tomb. He discussed epitaphs in a perfectly light hearted way and I never dreamt he was so near death.



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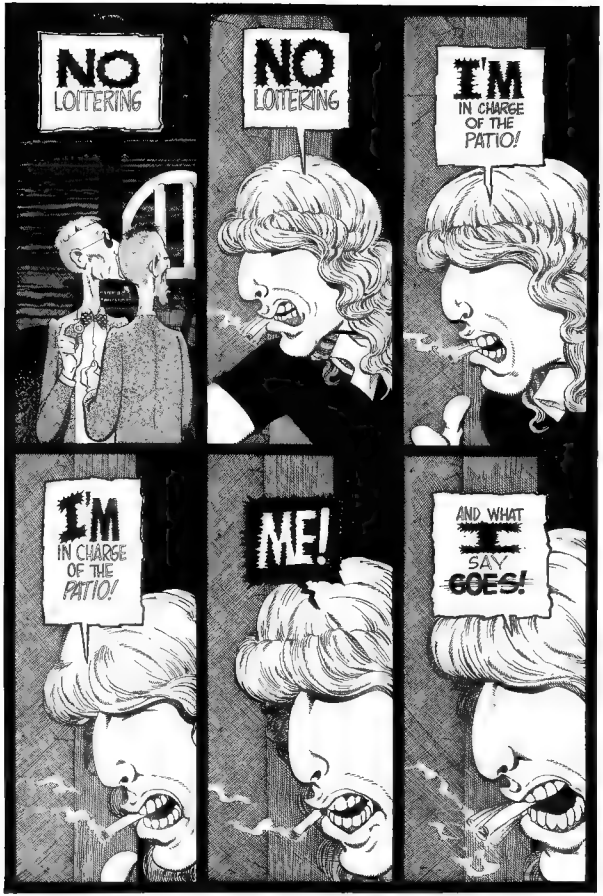

NO LOITERING
NO LOITERING
I'M IN CHARGE OF THE PATIO!
I'M IN CHARGE OF THE PATIO!
ME!
AND WHAT I SAY GOES!

AND I SAY
"NO LOITERING NO LOITERING"
GET OUT OF HERE NOW
OR I'LL CALL FOR A GUARD
AND SHE'LL ARREST BOTH OF YOU

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dave,

My wife and I went to the nearby town of Hollywood to walk up and down the boulevard to take in the sights and check out the local scene this past weekend. This is what we do for entertainment because Reagan and Bush have stolen all our money and we're broke and too poor to do anything else. Well, there are other things we do for fun, but our bed is in the shop.

Anyway, on the boulevard I happened upon a used book store. My big weakness is bookstores. I can never pass one without going in. And lucky for me, since I found a real treasure this time.

Beds by Groucho Marx. I couldn't believe my eyes. I love Groucho. The man has been my personal hero since about the age of eight. But in all the reading I have done on him, I have never heard or seen anything about him writing a book. Now I'm worried about whether or not he wrote any others. Where can I find them?

I know how much you respect the unique genius of Groucho, so I'm sending you a zerox of the book. I don't know whether you have it or not. But I knew that like me, if you didn't have it, you would want it. I would send the original, but it's MINE!

I have been reading Cerebus since issue 136, and while I have loved every one to date, the ones with Lord Julius have always been my favorites. Reading your Lord Julius is like watching a movie with him in it. I can not believe how dead on you are with the character. His body language. His wit. It is all there. It is almost as if he never died. He just moved to Canada and started a new career in comics as a character in your book.

Also, do you have a copy of The Groucho Letters? It is a book of his personal correspondence over the years with various celebrities, which is very funny. If you don't, let me know, I would be very happy to xerox that for you as well. I had to search quite a while for it myself, but it was worth it.

By the way, Jaka's Story was wonderful. I can't wait for the start of the next novel. Your work just gets better and better. It is what keeps me reading comics. Everytime I decide I'm going to quit the hobby, I think 'but what about Cerebus?', and it always ends that particular train of thought.

I have no criticism of your work, except maybe that you don't use Lord Julius enough, but he is always worth the wait.

Hope you enjoy the Beds as much as I did.

Marvel sucks and all that sort of stuff.

Keep the faith,
Bill Woods
618-1/2 East Chevy Chase Dr.
Glendale, CA
USA 91205

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just wanted to drop you a brief note to tell you how much I enjoy Cerebus. I enjoy it a lot.

Gee, now what?

Well, for one thing, I continue to be amazed and astounded with each issue. I've cut my comic book reading down to very few titles and in recent times of financial woe, down to nothing, but I can always budget for Cerebus. My wife used to call it an addiction. If that's the case I don't want the cure.

With the end of Jaka's Story I'll be glad to see the return of our little grey buddy, but I don't think I'll stop reflecting on the last story for a while yet. After sitting down and reading the whole story at once I was able to grasp the entire scale of the whole thing even more so than reading each issue separate. I am only astounded further and deeper than before. Your observations and statements on the human condition make me want to look at the window to make sure you aren't peeking in.

One day I hope to present my son with a complete set of Cerebus to read. Whether this be in individual issue, soft or hardcover reprint, etc., it doesn't matter. In 138 issues we have seen the growth of a true storyteller. I'm almost afraid to think of what I'll be passing on to others after the second half of this story is told.

Enough of this mindless praise. If I ever get this graphic novel I'm working on finished I'll be sure to send you a copy. After all, you have been very inspirational as well as entertaining. Thanks for sharing with me.

And thanks for listening.

David Birdsong
1106 North Oaks Drive
Nashville, TN
USA 37211

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I'm with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, moving out today for Saudi Arabia and the worst political mess since a patriotic Serbian with more fervor than common sense shot an asshole with friends in very high places. Conflict seems unavoidable.

Nonetheless, I will support this war IF the U.S. gets something besides a pat on the back and slightly lower crude oil prices for a month or two. Something like, say 10% of Iraq's oil reserves and Iran's port of Aqhaba (or whatever it's called).

Our nation cannot afford to sling around such heavy resources without substantial compensation anymore; we rebuilt Germany and Japan, give billions yearly to other nations with no guarantee of payback, and have a trillion-dollar deficit!

I'm a tank driver on an M1A1. It's my life on the line out there. And damned if I'm gonna give it up for nothing!

Outbound & Outraged,
Scott Malcomson, Specialist Class 4
U.S. Army, Armor Branch
P.S. Cerebus is great. Keep it up.
P.P.S. The above P.S. is an incredible understatement.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I've been re-reading Church & State in light of what happened in Jaka's Story, and I had a few thoughts about power.

Because of what they did to Jaka, and their mean and repressive nature in general, I've been hoping that the Cirinists would lose their control. The question is, who would take over in their place?

The republicans are hypocrites, the Anarcho-Romantics are dupes, the United Feldwar States was a bunch of rich guys making themselves richer, the Tarimite Church is full of power-hungry clerics, the Kevillists are probably no better than the Cirinists, Cerebus just uses people to get rich and powerful, and the peasants and livestock are too stupid to know any better. Everyone who could possibly get power doesn't deserve it and would only misuse it.

In Cerebus, there are no good guys. There is no utopian dream. Everyone who could have been at the Final Ascension - Weisshaupt, the Roach, Astoria, Henrot, Fred and Ethel - would have messed it up just as Cerebus did.

You have created a world in which there is apparently no hope for a well-governed society, at least not in this generation. The only hope for happiness is on a local level, where small groups of people (Jaka, Rick, Cerebus, Oscar) can

find some companionship and love as long as they stay out of the government's way. For me, living in the United States of America (a.k.a. a bunch of rich guys making themselves richer), it all sounds a little familiar.

This is a great book, Dave. Keep it up.

Love and kisses,
Danny Horn
180 Bowen Street #8
Providence, RI
USA 02906

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I was going to just send the (enclosed) postcard but I realized that I wanted to rant and rave about PIRANHA PRESS a bit. I bought Kyle Baker's WHY I HATE SATURN as soon as it came out because I've always liked his work. But $14.95? I bought Kyle's last graphic novel THE COWBOY WALLY SHOW for only $8.95 (a DOLPHIN/DOUBLEDAY BOOK 1988) and it was at least as good and it was longer (I think).

When PIRANHA first began, DC press releases proudly introduced Mark Nevelow as someone who didn't, hadn't and wouldn't read comics, mainstream or otherwise. This was supposed to guarantee a new refreshing editorial attitude. Bullshit! I wrote Mark Nevelow advising him to check out Spiegelman, Chester Brown, Alan Moore, Ted McKeever, Pekar, Crumb and of course Sim. He didn't listen. He didn't write back. I've read at least one issue of everything PIRANHA has put out (I work in a comic shop so I can read for free). In my loud but humble opinion they've had three successful (but overpriced) publications to date; one being the aforementioned WHY I HATE SATURN. Another one was Alec Steven's THE SINNERS (No relation to Sampayo & Munoz' Alack Sinner) this was a strong story of an abused child and his repercussions. Unfortunately Mr. Stevens second PIRANHA book, HARDCORE, didn't work nearly as well. It was supposed to be about the 'punk' sub-culture.

The third PIRANHA book that I like was the Bill Loebs/Sam Kieth collaboration, EPICURUS THE SAGE.

Notice something about these three? They're all written and illustrated by pros who've been previously published! Big Deal, Nevelow! I've only seen Alec Stevens in some FANTAGRAPHICS magazines but Bill Loebs does JOURNEY and DC's FLASH, Sam Kieth has done HULK and WOLVERINE for Marvel as well as ALIENS for Dark Horse and Kyle Baker has done TRANSFORMERS, AVENGERS and SPIDERMAN for Marvel. I can't imagine why DC hired Nevelow in the first place. I would've chose Denis Kitchen or Diana Schutz (not that they're available). Nevelow is a LONG way from breaking new ground. And judging from sales where I work (and the nearly treacherous price tags) I can't imagine that PIRANHA is profitable. I'm sure we sell at least 80 copies of CEREBUS for any one copy of any PIRANHA book.

So have you read COWBOY WALLY SHOW? I'll loan you my copy if you'd like. Enough ranting; time for breakfast.

Peace and light.
Charlie Harris
2944 N. Euclid Avenue
Tucson, AZ
85719 2526

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Friends,

This letter is in response to Casey Bowser's letter who stated that Dave is not god. It has been revealed to me that this is indeed false. Dave is God, and he knows it. He can even be an asshole if he wants to and get away with it because God does those things and he doesn't need a reason Maybe Job got totally fucked over because God was bored - who cares!

Listen my dear Cerebus readers, Dave is the creator of our Universe, and we await each month for him to bestow his wisdom upon us. dfjkblagohe-minspodchzepoz (I'm speaking in tongues now) clavemobingob - Some of you out there right now with existentialist attitudes, and like Neitzche think God is dead. But this is not so. Just because Dave the Almighty has left the letters page doesn't mean he doesn't care. He still listens to our prayers, and watches everything we do. And sometimes he doesn't like it. No sir, the Creator and other loyal servants believe the human race is on the edge of destruction. I tell you this: No one may mention their girlfriend who recently broke up with them unless there is a logical point behind it! The Creator also doesn't care which groups you listen to, or if you hate the Beatles. We as loyal followers and true 'Dave Advocates' must set an example for the rest of society. Who am I to tell you what the creator wants? I have studied the Word of Dave and live by faith. Call me a fanatic, but those who believe shall be rewarded!

We must show that we are intellectuals by not abusing Dave's Universe. Grab your typewriters and take whatever mind altering chemicals you have to make it sing! We must set an example for all sinners, so we can change their lives! When I speak of siiiinners, I speak of those who read the Devil's comics of DC (666 5th Avenue) or Marvel. I hear Fred Hembeck was going to do a story called "Fred Hembeck Fucks Up the Marvel Universe!" but Stan Lee beat him to it. If there is a Phantom Zone, it awaits for sinners like you! Amen!

I know there's some of you out there RIGHT NOW, reading this that need DAVE in your life. I want you all to stop what you're doing RIGHT NOW and confess that Dave is the TRUE messiah. That's it, get down on your knees! No one's asking you to bend over. CONFESS! Because you know that deep in your heart it's true. Maybe you're out there, and you're alone, and your life is empty, but DAVE can change all that! YES FRIENDS! Let DAVE come into your life!

But sometimes the only way you can do it is by giving. He can't do it alone, you have to let him take control It doesn't take much. A mere tithe of 2 bucks excuse me, 2 dollars and 25 cents can bring you Salvation! Hallelujah! And if you really want to look good in the Creator's eyes, you can send cash to my address below. I need to build an amusement park and hire a secretary to take off her clothes and watch me beat off. This may be optional on your behalf.

Anyway, do not deny Dave The Almighty as our savior, and those who incur his wrath deserve what they get. Amen! I speak to you Dave - give us a sign! Let us know you are out there!

In His Name,
J. Bakerswagnulton
426 North St. Apt. C
Cape Girardeau, MO
USA 63701

P.S. Dave, I must confess. I have two Richie Rich and one Archie comic(s). Please forgive me! When you read this, I will have burned them and said "Hail Dave!" 500 times.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

It is my understanding that you have heard about the famed POTATO CHIP of TARIM that was discovered here in Fitchburg, MA. I am the keeper of this most sacred item, and it has been my intent to drop you a line for a while now to tell you this amazing story. Sadly, one of the witnesses to this event, a young dweeb named Steven who has not yet gained the maturity or self-control to have patience, jumped the gun and wrote you a letter first. Ah, youth . . . You should see him running around, Dave, showing everyone his "authentic signed by Dave Sim letter with typos and everything!" It's a pretty ugly sight. But now, here is the full unabridged tale of the chip. It all started pretty simply one Sunday here at That's Entertainment II in Fitchburg. Myself and my best friend Patrick Fitzgerald (he only needs a Cerebus #4 to complete his MINT run) were chatting about the latest issue of Jaka's Story, when in walks Chris Coleman (another megafan of Cerebus) who joined the conversation. Steven the Sunday leech was already lurking about, so this gave us four Cerebus fans at one time in one place, which we thought was pretty cool. As the talk started to get more involved in serious Cerebus questions (when will Astoria have the furry one's baby; when will he meet Cirin; is Cirin his mother or what; when will Boobah come back; you know, serious stuff), who should walk in but Carl Hommel, our most authoritative

expert on Cerebus (he even has a Diamondback deck, the lucky stiff). Well, needless to say, we had something going now, because here was represented the most loyal Cerebus fans Fitchburg has to offer, all in one place at the same time, and it was a completely random occurence. Puts a shiver down your spine, doesn't it? Anyway, the conversation got deep, and was revolving around the significance of the faces on the Diamondback deck and how the roles they represent relate to the overall story, when it happened! As I was casually passing around a bag of potato chips for social consumption, the One True Chip was pulled from the bag! (see enclosed photocopy). It was about as close to a religious experience as I've ever seen. There was a brief moment where we joked about eating it and being imbued with incredible relevations about all the heretofore unanswered things we spent so much time chatting about, but it was finally decided that such a wondrous discovery in such wondrous circumstances surely must be a sign from Tarim him/her self, and so the chip was placed securely in a plastic baseball card holder and now resides most safely in my library. We look at it now and again and reflect back on that moment whenever we experience grave personal doubts about the stability of life in general, and it serves us well as a source of proof that there are some things we are not meant to fully understand. In any event, I hope you enjoyed hearing about it, and if you ever swing by this way, you are certainly welcome to a private viewing. Bring your own dip.

Most sincerely,
Mark Dufresne

83 Bel Air Drive
Fitchburg, MA
USA 01420

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Having only begun collecting and reading comic books about a year ago, I was not 'around' when the first 120 or so issues of Cerebus came out. Faced with uncertainty and a complete lack of plot understanding, but finding the art quite interesting, I decided to buy some back issues. Issues 91 and 92 certainly didn't help me understand the story a bit. A rather substantial "leap of faith" later, I called Kitchener and ordered all four of the reprint books. Having just finished reading those 2265 collected pages in the space of three days, I have a few comments.

First, the art and story are both very good, and Cerebus now ranks as one of my favourite comic books. It also illustrates what I think about the comics market now, and that is the independant publishers are doing the more innovative and daring books, and Marvel and DC, with a few exceptions, put out mostly the same old thing. I just wanted you to know that your belief in your own company and your dedication to your artistic and creative instincts is appreciated.

Second, I'm not sure if I should be jealous of those of your readers who have read Cerebus every month for the last ten years or not. Having read 110 issues worth of Cerebus in only three days, I certainly missed out on the anticipation inherent in all those "cliff-hanger" endings. (With reference to issue 101; no pun intended). I did, however, have the satisfaction of knowing what happened next without having to wait 30 days, and I think that I would rather have spent ten years than three days experiencing the story of Cerebus.

Third, from various other back issues that I have read, I'm quite confused as to why so many people feel compelled to write "Aardvark Comment" and do nothing but tell you what a jerk you are. Sure, these people have a right to voice their opinions, but don't they realize the most powerful method of voicing displeasure with a comic book is to not buy the comic?

Fourth, as Assistant Manager for Domino's Pizza #4765 in Hazleton, PA, I feel compelled to answer Dave Katzman whose letter is issue 128 read: "The owner of Domino's Pizza is a declared pro-lifer (anti-choice that is) so don't buy from them. Their pizza sucks anyway." What this has to do with your comic book I don't know, but as an employee of Domino's Pizza, I thought I would set the record straight.

To begin with, of Domino's Pizza's 5000+ stores, they are split roughly 50/50 between corporate and franchise ownership. This means that a unilateral boycott of Domino's Pizza would affect many honest business owners whose opinions on abortion are not public knowledge. That's pretty unfair.

In addition, whether of not Tom Monaghan decides to contribute large sums of his own money to pro-life organizations or not has no bearing on his pizza delivery company. You should order from Domino's Pizza because you like the product and service or you should not order because you don't like the product and service. If you are pro-life or pro-choice or agree or disagree with Mr. Monaghan's personal views does not matter. To try and force people to act according to your opinions is pretentious and rude. People should act according to an informed decision made after understanding both sides of the situation.

Finally, with that said, I'd just like to thank you once again for this book, and let you know that I have had some of the most sleepless nights I have had in years, what with trying to put down Church and State to get some sleep and just not being able to do it.

Sincerely,
Stephen J. Sullivan
571 Alter St. Apt 1
Hazleton, PA
USA 18201

P.S. My copy of High Society fell almost completely to pieces on reading it and if you have a return policy that would get me a new copy, I would appreciate you letting me know what to do or where to send it for replacement. If no such policy exists, can you recommend a good glue for putting the binding back together and getting the cover back on? Thanks.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

This is the fourth time I've started this letter. And now my pen's leaking. Shit.

Anyhow, I just wanted to say a couple of things to Larry Young. For one thing, living at home when you're 25 and not an invalid is depressing. Yeah, sure, it's free and all, and my parents are pretty laid back, but going from a 6-room apartment, even in Worcester, Mass. to a one bedroom in Pittsburgh, PA makes you want to rethink your priorities. How do you weigh sanity and creativity against 3 meals a day and clean sheets on the bed every week?

And being a dealer is great. But if one more yuppie tells me how his or her parents threw away his or her comics, baseball cards, toys, fill in the blank, I'm going to scream. Did you know that for every nice little kid there are 3-5 little dirtbags? True. So a high school kid comes in a couple of days ago and asks me what's new and cool. I point him towards Brat Pack, Hard-Boiled, Pirate Corps!, etc. etc. and he says, "No, I mean from Marvel!" AAArgh. I told him GI Joe was really picking up steam again.

Sorry about that. Had to vent the spleen. Anyhow, Larry, thanks for keeping me in line. I mean, how many other people's friends give them shit in a public forum for not calling/writing? And thanks again for the logo, too. But get out of Massachusetts, man. The "Miracle" is over. Where have all the flowers gone?

Later.
Patrick Donley
Time Tunnel Collectibles
1001 Castle Shannon Blvd.
Castle Shannon, PA
USA 15234

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Please let Glenn the Hippie know that I heard from Mike Bannon a month ago, and he's doing fine.

Strawberry Jam Forever,
Paul Stockton
Strawberry Jam Comics
5334 Yonge Street
Suite 120 Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 6M2

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Well, it's time I gave you my thoughts on JAKA'S STORY. Here they are.

1) Whatever the alleged goal of Cirinism is, it's clear that its true goal is to destroy self-esteem in whoever has it. It's not an accident that those that the Cirinists most persecute are those who are outstanding at what they do (Jaka and Oscar). People who seek a joyous kind of life must believe that that kind of life is proper – and that they're worthy of seeking it. Such people are the ones who're most likely to thumb their noses at the Cirinists. And if the other people got a wiff of the unbelievers' sense of lifes' possibilities, they might take a look around and put an end to all the self-sacrificing. Cirinism wants docile, easily-led followers. To get that, they need a moral code that preaches virtues which are, in reality, impossible to practice. It's not an accident that the signal tower guard in CEREBUS 101 was thinking "Oh Terim, I have sinned and blasphemed in my heart, and I am unworthy." In other words, "Don't stop the war for me, Goddess — I'm a contemptible scum, a worm in the dust. Stop the war because it would harm Cirin" (who gave the order to invade.) What the signal tower operator doesn't realize is that every other Cirinist who tries to go around practicing the virtues according to Cirinist doctrine is probably feeling the same thing (I'm unworthy, but Cirin – ah – she's good.)

3) Your past novels have ended in disaster and catastrophe for all the characters involved, and I'd no reason to think that Jaka's Story would be any different. I half-expected to see the novel end with the death of Jaka or Rick or both. Okay, you spared us that. But if anything could take second-place for misery, and suffering, it's the ending we did receive.

4) My guess at Jaka's reason for killing the fetus? Her thoughts to Cerebus in #75: (she) feared having the baby would make her ugly – and that she wouldn't be able to dance anymore. Anyone out there who thinks such a reason is frivolous and vain misunderstands the nature of the role that dancing plays in Jaka's life. Her life is mostly drudgery and routine. Her gift is what makes each day worthwhile for her. Her gift is the only thing that gives her days the sense of that irrepressible zest for living that she feels. I'm sure it's also a boost to her confidence that she can communicate this feeling to others through her dancing. Giving up dancing would literally turn Jaka into the kind of dead emotional zombie that Mrs. Thatcher wants her to be. That, I submit, would be obscene.

Jaka was an innocent victim who faced an impossible situation: sacrifice her own happiness, or the thing that she knew was crucial to Rick's happiness. Tarim only knows the mental agony that she endured for those long months of the pregnancy, wrestling with that impossible decision. Either-or. It can't be both ways, and there was no third possibility. She couldn't do that to Rick, and she also couldn't do that to herself.

Why else would it have taken her six months to finally decide?

5) Jaka paid a terrible price for trying to have her cake and eat it too. But based on what we've seen, I believe that the consequences of not having an abortion would have been far worse for her. Jaka was a dancer before she met Rick. She was a complete, self-sufficient human being before she met Rick. It will be hard for her to adjust – but eventually, I believe, she'll be able to dance again. If she had had that baby she wouldn't have been able to. She'd have had to face the endless, gray misery of an existence of unending drudgery — with nothing to show for it but the knowledge that she'd made her husband happy.

Jaka can't play games of that kind. Neither can any other person of authentic self-respect.

So, looking at it that way, at what actually happened, and comparing it with other possibilities that were not allowed to come into existence, Jaka's story had a less disastrous ending than it might have had. Despite the fact that it ends on the the lowest moment of Jaka's life, I believe that she is preserved intact. She'll go on.

6) It's interesting to note that even the Cirinists seem to sense the futility of trying to defeat and rule Jaka by their usual methods. If one accepts the hideous guilt that the Cirinists throw out, one responds to their wishes like a fish on a hook. Jaka never accepted the guilt. In his own way, neither did Oscar. (Will those two years of hard labor stop Oscar from writing? I don't believe it for a minute. Might as well ask him to stop breathing.)

7) I like how everything makes sense in this novel. After seeing Rick's haircut in the 23rd segment, even Mister Withers's haircut makes sense. The tidbit we learn is that it wasn't Pud's personal style to get that type of cut — he had it because the Cirinists had a military dress code, which he felt he had to obey to the letter. (I was asking myself when Jaka was thrown in prison: "Why didn't they shave her hair off?" This is what the Germans did to the Jews in the concentration camps during the Holocaust. It's a way of beating people down psychologically — to make them see that they have no control even of their own bodies, thus sapping their will to resist. The Cirinist code for different treatment, deriving from one's sex must be a strange one.)

Another anomaly: punishment for striking/hurting/killing a woman is very severe — yet the soldiers were ready to execute Jaka when they arrested her. Does "dancer" invalidate one's claim to the title of "female" in the Cirinist moral code?

8) On the issue of dancing "arousing strange men": This was touched on briefly during one of Mrs. Thatcher's interrogations of Jaka. Thatcher attempted to discredit Jaka's assertion that Pud's accepting Jaka as a dancer in his pub was not an act of civil disobedience, but originated from his crotch. What was never acknowledged in that conversation by either party was: Pud getting turned on was, per se, an "act of civil disobedience." The Cirinists are out to destroy all forms of enjoyment possible to human beings. So naturally they forbid sexual thoughts and that which might lead to them. What Jaka (and Pud and the Cirinists) fail to perceive is that sexual arousal, far from being a guilty secret, is an affirmation of one's love for existence. Far from

feeling guilty about what she did for Pud, Jaka should hold that achievement up (getting him aroused) as her badge of honour. She got a man who's never known love (or much self-respect) to begin to feel like a man (as opposed to a shriveled, emasculated cripple, unfit for living).

Despite what the Cirinists preach, the body and mind are an integrated unit — which is the reason why with whom you sleep with is important to you. I doubt that Pud ever had an urge to rape his mother — because his mother was the kind of woman who made him feel nothing but a sense of duty and self-loathing. Who the hell would want to have sex with a woman like that? (Which raises some interesting questions about Pud's father, doesn't it?) Jaka showed Pud that there is another kind of woman out there — another view of a human being. Pud's mind could sense it — even if not consciously. His body reacted accordingly. To paraphrase one of America's founders, "if this be sin, make the most of it."

Unfortunately, what Pud does with that feeling is up to him. Pud was disturbed before Jaka came along — and his actions (or sickness) is not her responsibility.

9) Finally, for Jaka to sign an admission of wrongdoing in order to stop sickening psychological torture, to preserve the remains of the dignity and respect she felt for Pud, is no disgrace. No matter what she signs, she knows that dancing isn't wrong. Despite all the Cirinists can do, Jaka remains intellectually incorruptible.

Thanks very much for publishing "St. James Infirmary Blues", and for the comments on "Another Crisis". You really made my day. Maybe my year.

By the way, if you enjoyed "Another Crisis" you should know that the dialogue was lifted verbatim from Thomas Sowell's essay of the same name. If you want to read more of his stuff, he's written 15 books or so, on everything from choosing the right college to the history of Marxism. My favourites are the collections-in-book form of his newspaper essays: Pink And Brown People and Other Controversial Essays (1979) and Compassion Versus Guilt (1986). Knowing your interest in politics, economics, and relations between groups, I think you'll enjoy these titles very much.

Bye for now,
Larry Dudock
9 Cornwallis Road
Setauket, NY
11733

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mister Andrew Davis:
Goodness.
Quite sincerely,
Jon Koriagin
1758 Blakes Lee Avenue
Arcata, CA
USA 95521
P.S. That's "Mr. Confused Mother-fucker" to you.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I want to ask you whether you are going to reconsider the 'never-to-be-reprinted' attitudes you were wearing the last time you were answering letters. Magicking and Silverspoon came out in a separate bi-weekly last fall, and you might reprint some other short stories in the same way. Back in #91 you were even considering Dick Glass' ideas about fitting them into the main story. I can understand why that might be problematic, but reprinting them in separate bi-weeklies would bypass the problem and make them available to a lot of latecomers. I have Swords #3 and "Between 20 and 21" was very helpful.

In the same way, while 112/113 would not fit easily into either Church and State or Jaka's Story, it sheds light on the way the whole ascension sequence has affected Cerebus and what state of mind he is in afterwards during Jaka's Story. It also introduces the old geezer who reappears in Jaka's Story and provides information that during Jaka's Story, the Cirinists have taken over lest (something not stated clearly in the first several issues of the story itself). In short, even if it doesn't fit into any of the 'novels' it is, as "Between 20 and 21", an indispensable part of the whole 6000 page story. Some of Art Hullinger's remarks (#129) make me suspect the same is true for #51.

Could you reprint that one as well as the short stories when you're through with the High Society bi-weeklies? You could use the Swords covers as reprint covers for the short stories.

The High Society reprints are a great improvement over the first 25 bi-weeklies, by the way. The original covers are no longer reduced to stamp size and instead of ad-reprints (!) we get the notebooks. Very nice.

Special thanks to whoever at the office sent me issues 82 and 84 last year in spite of my money order being a few dollars short of the price and postage for these and the two 500-page books.

Lars Harthoj
Wittenberggade 35, 3th
2300 Kobenhavn S.
Denmark

P.S. I would like you to answer this letter in the column, since the reprint question is of general interest. I can take an unnecessarily rude answer (of your formerly patented kind) without feeling crushed.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Gerhard:

Your inking is absolutely the most stunning work to ever grace the pages of a graphic narrative, period. My favourite pieces by you are the cover to High Society, page one of Jaka's Story #21, and the entire issue of Jaka's Story #8, especially the details of Oscar's house.

I felt it was about time this letter was written. With Mr. Sim getting all the attention (the occasional, "Oh, and tell Ger he's doing a good job" just doesn't cut it) I felt it was time one of the unsung geniuses of graphic narratives received some long overdue praise. As a graphic narrative artist myself, I find myself studying how you interpret something for the illustrated page more often than I study anybody else. Your quintessential piece is the first page of Jaka's Story 21. I don't mean to say that your other drawings are less spectacular but this single piece communicates more messages and emotions that any other of your single panels in memory. The details you painstakingly never neglect, your excellent cross hatching, your fine sense of shading you use exceptionally well in Oscar's house . . . all of it is breathtaking and is worthy of serious study in future college art courses. Newfangled artists such as Martin Wagner and Eddie Campbell may display exquisite ability with pen and ink but none of them will ever be able to reach the level you're at. Your art is to Cerebus as God's breath of life was to Adam. Well, maybe that is carrying this praise thing a tad too far but you get the idea.

I do have some questions I wish to ask you. First of all, what other work outside of Cerebus have you done and are planning to do? How did you come to work for Dave? What were you working on before he hired you? I hope you stick around to #300 because I'd hate to think of Dave taking over inking chores again. Dave's a fine artist but it's your inking which gives each page its vitality.

If Dave allows this letter to be printed I hope you reply in the letter column. Dave may not want to but I see no reason why you couldn't. Other people may want to know the answers to the questions I asked, a fact Dave overlooks with every letter he prints which asks him a question.

Voraciously,
Jeff Stoneking
302 3rd Avenue NE
Waseca, MN
USA 56093

★★★★★★★★★★

David,

I don't think you'll ever be a man, but if you fuck the babes, hey, really Your art is better than your writing and it really, really, sucked to see you try and write from Wilde's point of view, much less assume to be Wilde in the process!

It's nice that you like him so much though and you do realize his greatness.

Thank you for that.
John Frizzelle

P.S. Gerhard, could you please tell me your real, full name? (Not so presumptuous as to put Thank you). Thank you.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I'm not going to sign this letter, but I've written you enough hand-written ones that you should know who it is.

My, that's freeing.

About this pot thing. Yeah, I use it, and yeah, I guess I should quit. I mean, when Bennet and Bush and Co. said they were going after "casual users" most people thought they meant "of cocaine", but it turns out they really meant "we're going to eradicate marijuana" - which was tried in the Reagan administration, and resulted in the epidemic of cocaine in the first place. So for practical reasons, if nothing else, now is a good time to stop.

Our culture (we live in different countries but basically share a culture) is becoming less tolerant of even legal drugs like alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine, and I can't say that this is bad. You and I aren't 20 anymore, either. What a young body can withstand may not be wise when one approaches middle age.

Still . . . I'm disappointed in you, Dave. You were one of the last "Yeah, I smoke pot, and so what?" revolutionaries left. The last of the white Rastas, as it were, preaching the Gospel of the Holy Weed. I look at what is happening to the High Times magazine (subject of a perfectly legal conspiracy of harrasment that has destroyed its advertising base and may yet kill that fine publication) and I see you quitting publicly (all right, it's not the first time, but still) and I keep hearing the politicians chanting "just say no", and I wonder if it's worth it.

But I'm going to do it. I'm going to stop, too. Get clean as a shark's tooth, pass any drug screen, no drinking, no smoking, nothing.

Then I'm going into politics. And one of my platforms will be to legalize marijuana.

Not legalize "drugs" (a silly notion - we have always had legalized drugs, just a differing variety of which drugs would be legal). Not "getting the mafia out" or any of that nonsense about reducing the deficit with drug money. I am not advocating legalization of anything "new" but pot. It is a crime that tobacco should be legal and marijuana forbidden. Nicotine has no medicinal use, provides a "high" so slight as to be nonexistent after the first few uses (although by then you're hooked, so it doesn't matter) and is, in its pure form, a pesticide so deadly that its use has been banned.

I will publicly proclaim that I want marijuana legalized so that I can smoke it! I don't want alcohol or tobacco, I want marijuana. You let me have my drug, I'll let you have yours.

Otherwise, tobacco has got to go.

Oops, I almost signed.

P.S. I have another reason to stop using marijuana - with my finances, pot and comic books are an either/or proposition and if it comes down to that I'd rather alter my consciousness with graphic fiction than with marijuana (although it's close . . .)

I've had the best of both worlds the last few years, smoking pot and reading Cerebus. But if I'm going to keep up with all this other great stuff out there (most of which have prices that make you look like Marvel and D.C. newsstand stuff – I mean, $11.00 for Taboo!) I'm going to have to free up some money from some other portion of my budget, and pot's the most expendable.

Well, thanks for your ear, or eye

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I knew you were arrogant, but for you to think you could win all the awards for the comic craft? That's just too much. I would not be surprised if you had your eye on the Oscar; in every category even!

You are good, Dave, but you must realize that there is always something or someone better that comes along. Lucky for you, there is no one else to write to. I can't get Hussein's address from Tom Ewald's mother.

To get to serious business, if I remember correctly, Lord Julius is 5 feet 7-1/2 inches tall, not 5 foot 8. Are you trying to make him into a God? Lord Julius certainly isn't larger than life. Just larger than a pencil. With lead and an eraser.

I shall leave you with this.

You're welcome.

Jim Cripps
5132 So. Norfolk Ave. #242
Tulsa, OK
74105-5610

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Seeing as it's November, I've decided to take up your offer earlier this year and am resubmitting "Sold Out" for publication in the Single Page.

It's been an interesting year so far; besides surviving "Jaka's Story" I've discovered that creating comics can be a profitable pastime as well. One of the local FM radio stations held a competition to increase their profile in which contestants had to interpret and display the station's logo in as imaginative a manner as possible. Well, four of us (including Peter Mullins from whom you've accepted a Single Page) put our heads together and decided to do a mini-comic as an entry. The seven or so pages we came up with entitled "Revolution" was a coldly calculated fantasy of a future revolution against an evil, oppressive system (what else?) which begins with the resurrection of a lost God of music (Yeah, he comes with an electric guitar too!). But hey don't blame us, this character called Dr. Dan is actually the mascot of the radio station and appears on their logo!. Anyway, the comic was designed to appeal to the "top 40" listeners of the station — you know, the ones who like to think that they're hip or cool but who are basically still conservative yuppies. Hence we loaded the comic with "wankerisms" which we thought they'd like — "nifty" science fiction trappings crossed with pseudo-mythological themes and topped off with an opening quote from the Beatle's song. Hey, how could we lose?

The bottom line is, — we didn't! In fact the four of us won the prize of $10,000. Not bad for a few days work and believe me, none of us had any qualms about taking money from a radio station whose music frankly we can't stand. Anyway, the other three used their share of the money to attend this year's San Diego Comic Con but being a final year medical student, I couldn't take the time off and so my share went to paying off my ever-accumulating debts. Bummer, huh? Maybe I'll make it next year. I hear you and Ger might make it next year too.

There's also a lit. con hear in Brisbane next year. Suncon, I think it's called and I hear Harlan Ellison will be attending. Now there's one person I'd pay money to see you toe to toe against (verbally that is). How 'bout it?

Anyway all the best with the Earth-pig. Any chances of another Cerebus Jam? Give Ger a raise or at least pat him on the head now and then.

Metaphors be with you,
Sam T.H. Yang
138 Beams Rd.
Boondall Hts. QLD 4034
Brisbane, Australia

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Just call me the man of many addresses. I think every time I've written you a letter, I've been somewhere new. Now I'm in Madison, Wisconsin — which is a pretty hip town — and my life is not my own. It belongs to the English graduate department here at the University of Wisconsin. I'm starting the masters program, and I've never had to work harder in my life. Just before I took time out to write this letter I was working on a 20 page paper I'm writing about Marlowe's poem Hero and Leander. I'm doing a feminist critique of it, and my thesis is that the poem eroticizes rape and perpetuates various rape myths.

Which brings me to Cerebus. There has always been a lot of discussion of feminist issues in the letter column — debates about how feminist you are and how feminist the book is and so on. I consider myself to be a feminist. And I'm not someone who just talks about it either. I realize that abortion is not the only issue, but right now it is the most urgent one, and, to that end, I'm one of the committee heads of Students for Choice here at U of W, and I'm quite proud that we've registered about 500 people to vote for pro-choice candidates this semester. When I read the final issue of Jaka's Story, I have to say that I totally freaked out in awe. I mean, imagine Ed McMahon saying "Yesssss!" the way he does to Johnny and that's the sound I made about 20

times. I felt that you really came through for me, because, unlike Lesley Wheeler (letter issue 139) I felt that the ending was drenched in irony. It showed the oppression of society and religion — not your ambivalence about abortion. Unlike Lesley, I did NOT sympathize with Rick at all. I don't think we were intended to. I think Rick turned into a fucking freak at the end. He completely forgot that he loved Jaka. And think ... he hit her! He fucking hit her. Why? One of the most basic underlying causes of patriarchy is male jealousy that it is women who give birth — are the life givers. He was infuriated by her action to control that function (ie. having an abortion) and I saw his hitting her as disgusting and monstrous and full of sexist anger. Not only that, but we already know that Rick is nearly a moron — not a man but a stupid kid. He won't get a job, but still thinks that somehow they could support a child. What an idiot. If it wasn't for Jaka, they'd both have starved by then. He thinks having a kid would be just a blast but Jaka knows the real truth. And if she had the kid (in that nightmare of a world!) how does she know she wouldn't get stuck with it, alone — like she is now. It's her choice, her right, not his. Rick is an overgrown boy who suddenly is told that his toy "boy" was taken from him. And it was the religious matriarchy (might as well be a patriarchy) which drove him to hate her for what she did. Just like Catholics and Fundamentalist Christians whose religions drive them to care more about fetuses than women.

And this brings up the letters of John C.B. Battin and Troy Lissoway (issue 139). Lissoway's letter was a good feminist analysis of the book (partially) but I can't believe that both of them felt that Jaka should have consulted or told Rick. They both fall prey to that same idea that the father should somehow have a say in the matter of abortion. What bullshit. It's Jaka's body, and she has a right to do whatever she wants with it. Jaka knew that Rick would not want her to have an abortion. In fact, who knows — with the rage he showed — I wouldn't be surprised if he would have decided to lock her up in a room just to make sure she couldn't get out and get one. Or that his begging and pleading would make her do what she knows is wrong. There was no reason that he had to be consulted because his opinion was irrelevant. If she wanted an abortion, he would have no right to stop her just as if a woman wants to carry a pregnancy to term no one has a right to force her to have an abortion.

As to pornography, I think it was made clear by Oscar that what Jaka did was art and not pornography. And as to her costumes — have you been to any modern dance performances recently Lesley? And even if it was porno - graphy — I do not believe in any form of censorship (let's not count snuff films and child pornography please). I think those feminists who think pornography should be illegal should wake up and see whose bed they're in (so to speak). The fight against pornography is led by the same right wing fanatics who want to make abortion illegal.

My final comments are also about letters. You published one of the saddest, most moving letters I've ever read — by The Ranger (issue 137). Me, with all my intellectual atheism and pro-choicism (I'm proud about them mind you), felt somehow shallow in comparison to a woman who has suffered through "hell" to reach the same conclusions which I have reached in my head. My feelings, and what support I can offer, go out to her.

But then, Dave, you wicked, twisted individual you. You immediately followed that sensitive letter with Andrew Davis' ignorant piece of shit. That was very scary, Dave. If you print this letter, I'd just like to say ... "Hey, Davis? Fuck off." Thanks I feel better now.

Your friend (I swear, I'd buy you a beer if you stopped by),

Dave Katzman
616 N. Carroll St. #404
Madison, WI
USA 53703

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,
How fucked.
And how true.
You anticipated that feminists would be offended by the end of Jaka's Story, and Lesley Wheeler's concerns (expressed in her letter, issue 139) are valid. But I wasn't offended. The story's too damn true-to-life to be offensive.

No, I've never had an abortion, and if I did, my husband would be right there with me, supportive as always. But last year, I signed my life away much as Jaka did, allowing evil politically incarnate to silence me. When the University of California at Berkeley decided to bust the lecturer's union, I let them. Despite all my fine, defiant rhetoric, despite my love of teaching, despite my students' loyal support, I pulled the flag down and abandoned the fort of freedom. I refused to do as the union begged, didn't allow myself to be used as their test case, didn't take the university to court and challenge its abusive hiring practices. I just left.

And spent weeks in a depressed daze, staring for hours on end at the fish tank in shock and grief and bewildered anger.

Fourteen years I'd been there ... fourteen years of giving the Big Bad U everything I had. I dance a damn fine class, Dave. But for seven months, seven months without a paycheck, seven months without a roomful of eager pupils. I had to find another dance, another art, another life.

And so, I wrote. I turned inward, poked and prodded the sediment in my mind, and poured out two science fiction novels and one short story. Turbulent, exhilarating: I found fertile currents I thought damned forever beneath the stifling, stagnant depths of fourteen years of academic prose.

"Art doesn't die. It just mutates.

I'm back to teaching now, in friendlier waters, but writing comes with me this time. I wish fervently that the same is true of Jaka — that she finds that she can dance in more than one fashion, in more than one place.

As always,
Carolyn Hill
2410 Dwight Way #8
Berkeley, CA
USA 94704

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,
I believe I've stumbled upon the five stages of corhic book collecting:

1. Early collector usually 12-13 years of age, loves either Marvel or DC, though never both. Usually feels the same way about Coke and Pepsi and McDonald's and Burger King.

2 Voracious collector: collects just about every Marvel & DC on the market, is willing to give independents a try, but still takes Marvel and/or DC seriously, as if they are true examples of comics. Goes to all the conventions, and tries to keep entire collection in mint condition and acid free.

3. Broke collector: resorts to a budget and cuts out uninteresting comics from collection. Sells some semi-valuable comics at a convention to get money to buy more comics.

4. Burnt out collector: realizing that academic and economic success is suffering because of collection habits, stops collecting for some months to live the life of a normal, comic-free soul. Leaves old comics in closet to get valuable and ferment.

5. Serious collector: finally realizes that most comics are shit, but some are actually intelligently done. Have given up on, and usually despises Marvel and DC, though buys some of their thought-out comics anyhow. Loves independents, and writes letters to the writers/artists to show appreciation.

Most collectors, if not all, fall into one of the above evolutionary stages, and hopefully ends up a 5 unless they progress into a higher state.

6. Comic book creator: finally figures out that the best comics come from within and struggles to make it in the field, alone.

Yves Grant
701 Webster
U of M.
Amherst, MA
USA 01003

★★★★★★★★★★

Respected Sir Dave Sim,
I have become acquainted with your work (Cerebus) through the kindness of a friend (I'll call him Enal S. Selrahc). Enal lets me borrow his comic books on occasion (he is a collector, but recently (last 2 or 3 years) he's only been getting Cerebus, Alan Moore's work, Frank

Miller's work, and very recently Bean World). He loans them to me in sets, eg. he lent me what he had of *Church & State* (about 80-), the first 25 reprints, and *Jaka's Story* as sets. As a result, (and this is no fault of Enal's) I end up reading 44 issues in 3 or 4 hours. For this reason, I think, I do not see *all* the intricacies of your plots as I don't have a whole month (or, as sometimes is the case, 2 or 3 months) to look over each issue. However, I still enjoy your book as the innovative and refreshing commentary on life that it is. I particularly enjoyed Jaka's Story, especially the part where Jaka noticed Nurse's hair was streaked with white and gray and her conversations with Talbot (Nurse) in the prison. Those Cirinists certainly seemed evil enough. They remind me of the Klansmen one can find hanging out in East Tennessee. Of course, their prejudices aren't the same, but their mannerisms sure are

Besides just the Cerebus story itself, the book has two other assets: the letters pages and the occasional Cerebus Preview. Some letters are great (like the one about the Epic of Gilgamesh) and others were exceedingly stupid (who WAS that guy saying pantheistic religions were out of date? Did he say you couldn't handle a Christian god? Seems like he couldn't handle a pantheistic god.) And previews of work by Alan Moore and Rick Veitch. You just can't say no to that.

I myself am a bit of an existentialist, I have no problems with the pantheistic religion of Cerebus's world. I just hope Cerebus continues to generally say "Fuck off!" to any fascist (other than himself), and that includes any fascists gods which happen to be hanging around (or goddesses, excuse me).

Well, I guess I'll end my letter here so it'll be short enough to print. I would really like a reply (in private) sometime. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Lynn Winebarger

(somewhere in the Sprawling Southern Reaches of the USA on a bus.)

P.S. Sorry about the sloppy writing. Like I said, I'm on a bus, going to California.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Having just received a note from George Will, I proceed naturally to you. Good evening. I've appeared in this column a couple of times prior, but those were in the heady and now vague days when you would occasionally reply in print. I certainly support your decision to eschew such discourse, though it is a bit dismaying. As a close personal bastard uncle to Derek and Mike and Paul, I hereby discharge my obligatory name-dropping thereof, and proceed, undaunted, to the point.

You are dangerous, sir. Now, that is a compliment of the highest order. I subscribe to the revolutionary ideas of Jefferson and Henry and Paine and the like. To make the comfortable uneasy, and the uneasy comfortable, such is a laudable goal. You do this, with incisive satire and social comment cloaked, though not disguised, in this format

But in fact, Dave, you are dangerous for an even better reason. I am dangerous for the same reason, and so appreciate it greatly. You both refuse to compromise your principles, and you do so publicly. I find the latter unreservedly commendable. For by so standing up to the great corporate wad, the beasts DC and Marvel, you set examples.

This is much. This is ethics. So many of the spineless masses compromise, sell-out, give-in, etc. And then the crepuscular mendicants make excuses, to themselves (beyond which they oft cannot see), until they believe the base canards, embuing these evanescent and ephemeral mendacities with a workable (to their internal emptiness), if callow and false, facade. And they meander throughout their jejune lives, not quite happy, but rather free of hubris and contention, with the illusory safety of numbers of big lies in tacit conspiracy.

Until they stumble upon a Dave Sim. Or stub their toe on me, I'll add with the immodesty born of the righteously indignant. When they come face to face with someone whose choices in life put to the lie their simple homilies that everyone must survive (absent the words of Pat Henry, who doubted life to be so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be paid for at the price of chains and slavery), as if survival as compromising slime with no self-respect or any from others was a laudable goal, this they find dangerous. In fact, it might be characterized as a weapon so dangerous no government dares attempt to use it. To wit: truth.

So thank you for standing up to the corporate wad. Berate it at every turn, as I do. Continue to shine the light on it. We need not be morally superior — though perhaps ethically — we need only shed light upon the crawling things under the corporate rocks. They will wither quite nicely, thank you. Thereby undoing the false illusions the wad uses to assuage the null place they confuse with a conscience.

One might here recall the words of Emerson: "They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful, now crowding to the barriers of their careers, did not yet see if a single man plant himself on his convictions and then abide, the huge world will come round to him."

Or perhaps, to alienate the rest, the poetry of Vachel Lindsay:

"Let not young souls be smothered out before

They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.

It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,

Its poor are oxlike, limp, and leaden-eyed.

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,

Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,

Not they serve, but have no gods to serve;

Not that they die, but that they die like sheep;

"The Leaden-Eyed" — Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931)

So, Dave, I guess just thank you for standing and shlicking, and for getting the lead out, if I may end with so quotidian a pun.

Take care, take chances,

Steven Zanvil Sawdkin

5411 N. Belt West #1

Belleville, IL

USA 62223

★★★★★★★★★★

Hello:

This overly creative salutation is the exact point of this letter. Since Dave has left this column in our capable hands, I feel that it would be irresponsible for us not to address all of the myriad of post-punk, post-holocaust, and dare I say post-communist problems facing all of us. In other words this life sucks, the planet is burnt toast and there are very few positive things we can do about it, however changing the name of this letters column would be a good start. Dave blew it with the name, he knows it (why do you think he is no longer making a Comment in it anymore), and even if we have been left to our own devices as an artistic statement as John O'Connor seems to think we still must stomp out stupidity where ever we run across it. Send your Letter Column Title suggestions to me (Dave is too busy and probably does not care) and I will have my non-comic reading roommate select one while doing blindfolded tequila shots.

Next item, no more Cassandra letters!

And finally, a masturbation tale. I work in the campus library and the other night there was some sick undergrad leaning through the stacks at a young woman while he was masturbating. Just standing there spanking the monkey. A Guard noticed him, told him to stop, which embarrassed him to the point of madly running out of the building. But before the doors closed I noticed that he was wearing a frat t-shirt. So let that be a lesson to all you kids who want to join a frat to live out your film fantasies.

Although,

David Schwarm

415 Gayley #303

Los Angeles, CA

USA 90024

P.S. Thanks Dave, you really do make this stoned head happy.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

The most disturbing (and possibly depressing) thing happened to me the other night. One of my best friends, with the unassuming name of Mike Rogers, called me from his place in Chicago to gloat and brag over the letter you sent him. Now the personal reply itself does not concern me; after all, I've received

two myself. What is terrible, is that you were either in a good mood at the time, or so obviously had some sort of pity on my friend's attempt at communication that you drew him an Elrod bunny on request! I mean, wasn't this guy satisfied with the Cerebus head you drew in the Cerebus volume he ordered?

Please Dave, ignore my friend from now on, for my sake! He told me he's gunning for a Cerebus tree, and if he ever gets one he's going to call me and say, "Dave Sim likes me better — Nyah, Nyah!", to which I would reply, "Uh...", thus adding to my feelings of fanboy inadequacy. My 'friend' feels special because his request was answered (Why in the hell did I ever tell him to start reading this book?), so please Dave, don't give in to him anymore. Or, if you do, please tell him to stop harassing me; I'm going to have to spend enough hours in analysis as it is.

Yours in inferiority,
Christopher M. Cochran
P.O. Box 139
Black Creek, WI
USA 54106

P.S. I was happy to see the return of the roach in the first issue of the new story. He was hilarious as always. The 'NormalRoach" persona was very good, but I kind of like the idea of 'CynicalRoach' myself (imagine the dieting he would have to do just to get down to those stick-figure proportions — ouch!).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear David Sim:

Thank you for responding to my letter. I appreciate that. Here is the letter I was going to send you last month. It got lost under a cluster of stuff in my room, along with chaos theory stuff, AD&D world plans, (let me check, I'm downstairs right now, I'll go up to my room now. I won't take but a moment.) (I'm back). A collage of a shoe (sneaker) my sister made and a quotation's book, which I used to look up a quote by Spinoza in a letter to a friend (Mark Hickernell) who is also a fan of your work (I first read High Society in Mark's dorm room back at school). It went "Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice." I truly believe this. Relations everywhere could benefit from this. It is too bad our grey-eared friend never found any.

Speaking of peace, I'm very concerned about recent incidents in the City of Peace, when 21 Palestinians were shot dead. I believe there is time for peace in the Holy Land, but a critical point in history has been passed and hopes for peace have dimmed. 'Where there's life there's hope.' So, there are no basket cases in this world, which I guess is what I've been trying to say. Sometimes, life is quite rough and it's difficult to know what to do, which is why Peace must be stressed.

Shalom,
Dave Auer
25 Crane Court
Middletown, NJ
USA 07748

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Well, it's 3:12 in the morning and I can't sleep. Why does this always and only happen to me on days when I absolutely and positively must get up at 7 a.m.? What do you think of my pink paper, by the way?

Anyway, I am addressing this letter to you because I wanted to ask Steve Bolhafner a question. To wit, do you subscribe to the theory that Gilgamesh was so upset about the death of Enkidu because they were more than 'just good friends'? Do you think they had the same type of relationship that Marion Zimmer Bradley claims of Akhilles and Patroklos in The Firebrand. I hope I haven't upset anyone's ideas about macho male heroes. I'd hate to have WHORE, White Heroes Opposed to Red Extremism, sending hit squads out to get me!

Advertisement: For the meaning of other interesting acronyms such as MACHO, FIAT, and INRI, read lots of books by Robert Anton Wilson. This will also give you fresh insights to both Cerebus, the comic — not the aardvark, and the letter column.

Fred in a dress? I assume Oscar ran into one of the other aardvarks. Since Cirin does not seem to be very short, my guess is the third aardvark is in the vicinity. Three aardvarks, all in one place! Something interesting must be about to happen. Of course something interesting, the flight of the tower that is, did recently happen — so maybe I'm wrong.

Well, to fit in with the latest letter writing trend I should mention a band and bitch about my love life. The musician is Jane Siberry who is definitely excellent and Canadian to boot. Am I the first person to mention a Canadian singer on this letters page? Do I get a prize now? If Cerebus had a navel, would you let me lick apricot brandy out of it?

You guys think that you have problems. Every time I get interested in some man, he goes running the other way, screaming in terror. This is no joke and only a mild exaggeration. I'm starting to feel like I'm Medusa except I don't have an interesting sculpture court.

But enough about my insecurities. Do you know how disconcerting it is to see your letter printed with no response? Try it — send a letter to yourself, print it, and see how you feel. Personally, I always enjoyed reading your responses but, then again, I never sent you mail back when you were responding to letters.

If I go to bed now, I'll get three hours sleep. Man, am I going to be in an evil mood tomorrow or what ...

Night night,
Judy (of the barefeet) Gibson
5726 Hobart St.
Pgh, PA
USA 15217

P.S. I am not pregnant.

Neither am I in the kitchen.

P.P.S. I was going to ramble on about having snakes for hair when I mentioned Medusa but I forgot. It would certainly be more INTERESTING than my own hair. Imagine having green hair that writhes and hisses at people. Probably wouldn't get crowded by people in the elevator.

★★★★★★★★★★

So here's the explanation Dave: (because you know there always is one) I wrote the following letter on 24 August, immediately after buying (and reading) Cerebus #137. And it was a garbled, twisted thing. Now, for a Cerebus letter, that isn't necessarily a bad thing, but this was horrid. So I tried to edit it, to have it make more sense, but I didn't retype it immediately because, I mean, hell, I've got a life too, Dave. You don't spend all your time answering these letters and I don't spend all of my time writing them. I thought that little agreement worked out well.

But, I kept thinking about it. A letter unsent is like a dead something-or-other or maybe a millstone around your whatzis. Anyway; I had to get rid of it. So, I'm going to retype it below and send the damn thing off to you. It'll probably make more sense than it would have two months ago, but it'll have less to do with anything, so that's the kind of trade-off we're talking about here. And, anyway, you're under no obligation to run the damn thing, of course. I just had to get rid of it. And, since it had your name on it already, I figured this was the best way to dispose of it.

Daverino (and Spunky, too):

Prepare yourself for another typical Cerebus letter.

Are you sitting comfortably? Good. Then I'll begin.

So I go to work today, it's my one month anniversary on this, the first real job I've had Graduated college in May, said goodbye to all of that academic bullshit to prepare the way for corporate bullshit. Wasn't a bad day. Typed labels for an hour and a half. But, then, the mystery woman (from the home office in Detroit, who had been buzzing ominously around the office all morning) called the Meeting From Hell. They're closing my whole god-damned office, Dave! One month I'm there, and they decided to move our whole little satellite operation into the bowels of corporate headquarters in beautiful scenic downtown Detroit, murder headquarters of the Western Hemisphere. Now, it's not my job to piss on Detroit, and I don't want to start a rampage of letters from crazed citizenry of the Armpit of America (those of them that can read, anyway), but shit, man!!

So all of us in the office, once the meeting was over (it was rather short, as you may imagine), did the typical shell-shocked bull sessions, pretended to jump

out the windows, all the usual just-got-laid-off stuff. We were all going to go out and get plastered, but it was still only 11am and they all chickened out. I split, and decided to check out a new comics shop in Manhattan with my newly-free afternoon (the mystery woman told us she didn't expect us to work after being told we were all canned, which was really nice of her, I thought, sarcasm dripping from every word.).

The nine story Mall That Walked Like A Man beckoned. A&S Plaza, I'm talking about. Nice, in a lamebrained architectural abortion sort of way, with big white rounded coffins hanging off the corners. That's where they put the yuppies who go over their credit limits, I guess.

Anyway, once I found the escalators (and it wasn't easy), Jim Hanley's Comics Universe (free plug for a store that seemed to be decent, if a tad innocuous) beckoned me. I was looking for the latest Sandman (free plug to a book that probably everybody who reads Cerebus reads already, but, what the hell, it's true and it's a decent book, from a corporate monstrosity but not having been around long enough to suck yet. I'm sure it'll be a piece of shit in five years, if not sooner, with crossovers with the goddamn Teen Titans or something, but the Beast 666 5th Avenue (incidentally soon to become the Beast 1231 Avenue of the Americas, if the latest Comics Journal is to be believed, which is really a shame, because it just doesn't have the same ring to it) has let it alone so far. You know, this is bullshit, trying to justify liking something even though it's a DC book. Hell, I really don't care who published something, if I like it. Gary Brodsky could publish a book, and I'd buy it, if I liked it. I'm just not politically correct. So shoot me.) But it wasn't in yet. Cerebus, however, was.

"WOW!!!" I said. Everyone in the store looked at me funny. They all knew nothing with Wolve-fucking-rene came out that week and couldn't dream about getting excited about anything else. But I was happy, so I didn't kill them. A new Cerebus, and on time yet. This every-three weeks thing has been a lot of fun, Dave, even though it wasn't quite as gut-wrenchingly cool as about ish 100 or so when you and the Spunkster were pumping 'em out bi-weekly, but, still, it was more Cerebus than any sane human being should be allowed to have.

Now, this is the point in the letter where I'm supposed to actually start to talk about Cerebus, how cool it is, how cool you are, how I almost wish I was a woman so that I could bear your children, how I wish I was born a Canadian so I could be more like you, how everyone in the world should be forced, at gunpoint if necessary, to buy a copy of each and every issue, instead of just having this cheap 30,000 or so circulation you've got now, all sorts of stuff like that.

Well, sorry, but not yet. I want to talk about my neighbours, if you don't mind. You see, I didn't mention where I work for a reason. I was saving it for now. I work at 387 Park Avenue, one floor above Marvel (double-bagged silver signed in blue ink gory cover adult version with some nudity but no explicit sex in a collector's edition of seven trillion copies that some stinking fan boy in Albuquerque will buy every damn one of) Comics. Now, their offices seem to look nice from the elevator. Three floors of graphic swill, but with a tasteful lobby with a professional looking but sorta-cute (or maybe it's I only see her too damn early in the morning to make any sort of coherent judgement) receptionist. You could almost imagine that they were a real company.

But no! Somehow, I know, they heard that a Cerebus reader, a connoisseur (get someone to check the spelling of that hideous word, will you, Dave? Thanks, you're a God.) of fine alternative graphic entertainment had gotten a job one more floor above them and was plotting to overthrow their dominance of the pig swallop in pulp form market. So they struck first, forcing my company to move and putting me into a defensive mode, forcing me to look for a job instead of drilling holes in the floor and plotting and generally being the sort of ruthless micro-encephalic who chips "Punisher's Armory" pages for further reference.

Now, this might sound a little strong to you. I understand. The claws of conglomeration clutch less strongly out in the wild woods of gentle, sylvan Canada than they do in the center of the white man's world domination machine. Now, don't get me wrong here. It's not that I mind world domination, or evil schemes pertaining thereunto, it's just, as a white man, I'm pissed as hell that they don't want to let me into their conspiracy.

So, the upshot is, I'm out of my job in three months, and I know in my bones, that I'm-the-best-at-what-I-do-and-what-I-do-isn't-pretty-admantium-laced-bones, that Marvel had a hand in it. What else could possibly be the answer? A looming recession in the Northeast? Hardly. General belt-tightening and consolidation measures in the publishing industry as a whole? Don't be naive. Simple coincidence? I think not. On my one-month anniversary? no, it had to be a warning, aimed at me. Nothing else will both fit the facts and my New-York-bred paranoia.

But, Cerebus cheered me up and confused me a heck of a lot on the ride home, even though I had a hard time concentrating on anything with the bus lurching like a water buffalo in the throes of orgasm.

This, right here, is the point where I actually start to talk about Cerebus. Public service message for those of you dozing off during the long-winded paranoid self-serving preceding portions of the letter. I had mentioned to my brother (primarily because he was the only one who would listen or care), three or four issues ago, that I wasn't sure you could end Jaka's Story so fast, that things didn't seem to be working towards an ending. But the ending was perfect, and well-paced, too. After reading it, I couldn't think of any other way for things to work out. (By comparison, I had a LOT of problems with the end of Church & State and with the character of the Judge in general, but you got that ten-page letter about two years ago, and didn't run it then, so there's no reason to exhume the dead To end this parenthical note on a more upbeat point, I did think Church & State was your best work to date (Jaka's Story has since surpassed it) until the Judge actually appeared and the story stopped for your little ultra-feminist reading of the big bang.)

The thing that most surprised me was the last two pages, of Cerebus coming back to find the hotel empty. Not that the page composition itself or Cerebus's reaction was in anyway jarring or unanticipated, but seeing the I'll earth-pig again was jarring. He looked wrong. At first I thought that you'd forgotten how to draw him, after this year-or-so that he's been gone. But then I looked closer, and, no, he still looks the same. It's just that I wasn't used to seeing him anymore. Jaka's Story was so much about normal people and their emotions that when the more fantastical creature came back into the story, it was surprising. Not bad. Not badly done. Just jarring, which I suppose was the intent. I don't want to seem to come down on the side of R. Fiore (in the latest Journal) in saying, dump the aardvark and it'll be better. Cerebus is still the best defined character in the story, the center around which all of the other plots and sub-plots circle, even if he is bizarre looking and an asshole. I won't say I or any of the rest of more-or-less devoted Cerebus followers wouldn't like to see what you'd do with something else, but we've all invested a lot of time and thought (though, of course, not anywhere near as much as you must have) into this book. We all wanna see how it ends.

One plot point, though. The "pull-the-rug-out" ending is beginning to become a Dave Sim trademark, and, although it isn't as bothersome as the typical Frank Miller plot-twist-and-copout-ending, doing anything all the time, or even too much, makes it far less effective and even an object of derision. In your favor, though, it looks as if you're developing away from that sort of thing. High Society had a completely deus ex machina ending, which was nevertheless very effective, in context and as the ending to your first big novel. I've already slagged Church & State and the no-wait-the-Cirnists-are-actually-good-fighters-and-they've-taken-over ending, but I hope you can see my point that this particular plot twist was not only not provided adequately for by preceding events, but, in fact, ran directly counter to earlier events. The other thing that struck me as not working as well as it should was the long Judge section,

which killed the narrative flow dead in its track for six issues or so, said narrative flow being, in my opinion, the best attribute of said story up until said intrusion by said long-winded joe on the moon who was placed there by said dead cosmic goddess Now Jaka's Story ends with Jaka seeing her husband for possibly the last time ever, and quite possibly the last appearance of either or both of them in Cerebus, and it was perfect. It's the only possible end to a love story in Cerebus, given your predilection for gloomy and morose ending.

Will there ever be any lasting happiness, for any characters, in Cerebus? The only ones who seem to be even vaguely happy ever are those with no idea whatsoever about what's really going on, like Elrod and the Roach

Speaking of silly, happy characters, I suppose there's no way Necross the HAHAHA Mad will ever be back, is there? Now, I know that he's Thrunk, and Thrunk's dead, but can't he have a brother, or a like-a-look, somewhere?

And speaking of like-a-looks, and finally getting to the subject at hand, what the hell is going on here? Four or five Juliuses? A midget Julius? I didn't know Essarcton had cloning technology. I hope this will make sense next issue (it didn't, though it certainly was funny), although, if it stays this funny I doubt I'll mind being confused. I mean this is what Cerebus is all about, isn't it? Confusion, lying, and incomplete information.

By the way, will these two epilogue issues be in the book? They do say Jaka's Story in big letters on the cover, which leads me to believe they will be, but I'm not sure, since the issues immediately following HS and C&S, both also funny issues, were not in those collections (as if you didn't know this!). I'll probably order a copy anyway, as soon as you decide to do a normal printing, but I'd just like to know.

Well, that's about it, except that your letter-page sarcasm is, if not sorely needed, at least warmly remembered in some circles, particularly mine. Answers to letters may seem to make the stand that your opinion is absolutely correct and the last word on the subject, but Cerebus readers haven't shown much aptitude at knuckling under to authority, even yours. Letter columns brushfires raged all the time, even when you insulted everybody. It's mellower now, which isn't necessarily a good thing, especially if it's strung out over six pages. Vaguely dissatisfied college students or young adults whining about their sex lives and/or jobs (like this letter for instance) can be deadly boring. If we have to tell each other off, it can take four months or more before responses see print. When you do it for us, it quickens the process considerably. It's a public service, Dave, you can't back out now.

And, if you think of anything we all can do to Marvel, let me know Maybe we can put fish in their coffeepots or something.

Bye!

And that's it. Puerile, huh? Well, I was a younger man then. The two months since then have seen me turn into the closest facsimile of a good citizen I will ever be. You may rest easy with the knowledge that, whether or not this sees print, I'm not very likely to begin a terrorist campaign against Marvel Comics.

Unless I think of something really good.

See ya!
Andrew Wheeler
44 Hillcrest Drive
Wayne, NJ
USA 07470

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Hey ho! C'est moi! No surprise eh? It seems that you've become a favourite 'pen-pal' of mine. Hope that that's not too much trouble.

Thanks for writing. Once again, I'm surprised (and extremely pleased) whenever I receive mail from you. It's nice when busy folk like yourself can acknowledge the existence of us grunts. Makes me feel like I'm worth something Human y'know?

Well, the Silver Lady has blessed me again. I have a job! Like wow dude! Who would have guessed? Now I can move out of the alley and into a cardboard box! Maybe even get the holes in my blanket patched up! HA HA!

I'm working in a knife shop. Very appropriate for me. Get to handle the swords as well. One of my few vices in the world. Hopefully the pay will be better sometime. I'll keep working. Looking forward to Samhain this year. Plan to either A) go to Disneyland or B) go to Rocky Horror Picture Show or C) race naked on a black mare all night long while waving my sword in the air. Decisions! Decisions! Decisions! Goodness my spelling sucks sometime. But you get the general idea.

Incase you or some of your readers have no idea what the hell Samhain is: let me explain. In the ancient Celtic lands of Europe (Britain, Scotland, Ireland and much of France) the Celts practiced Druidism. One of our main holidays is called Samhain: This holiday celebrated on October 31 - November 1, marks the start of the Celtic new year. We also celebrate and remember our dearly loved ones who parted from this world of flesh. Any excuse to party, don't you know? And being half Irish, I find it an excellent excuse.

Things are very strange these days. Full moon was last night and I found myself hardly affected at all. Not even the usual erotic nightmares that I always have the night before. BIZZARE — I'm almost worried. Oh well, I'm sure there is a reason.

Anxiously waiting to hear from other readers — I was really excited to hear that some had written me. Thanks to you all! And especially to Dave who was so very kind to print my letter in the first place.

Has anyone seen "Hardware" yet? It's stunning — absolutely nightmarish — and yet very sensual. A word to the wise however, do not see this movie while under the spell of acid, mushrooms, or any other form of brain warping substance. See "Hardware" straight for the first time — you need to be clear minded to appreciate the full affect it will have on you. I was absolutely numb, except for my pounding heart and racing memories. Then go and see it for a truly brain tweaking flight. I put it right up there with my other favourite flicks: Lord of the Rings, Clockwork Orange and Nightbreed. Bizzare taste in movies? Perhaps, but I like them. I just wish "Hardware" had a soundtrack available. The music is ... breathtaking. Brought tears to my eyes.

You know, next Tuesday, it will be Cheryl's 21st birthday.

Happy Birthday Cheryl; wish you were here. Shall I make a wish for you? How about. I wish you were alive — I wish I had been aware of your sorrows — I wish you had talked to me first — I wish your hurts hadn't driven you into taking all that coke that day — I wish you hadn't locked the door — I wish you hadn't blown your brains out — I wish I hadn't busted the door down and found you like that! I wish I could of had some answer to give to the police, your grieving friends — Gods! Your parents! I wished I had said "I love you" more often.

A word to readers — when there are people in your life than mean something to you, Great Goddess, tell them! Never go through the day without at least telling one of them how much you care. Because, it'll be too late when they're lowering the coffin down into the dark earth. And more often than naught — wishes never come true.

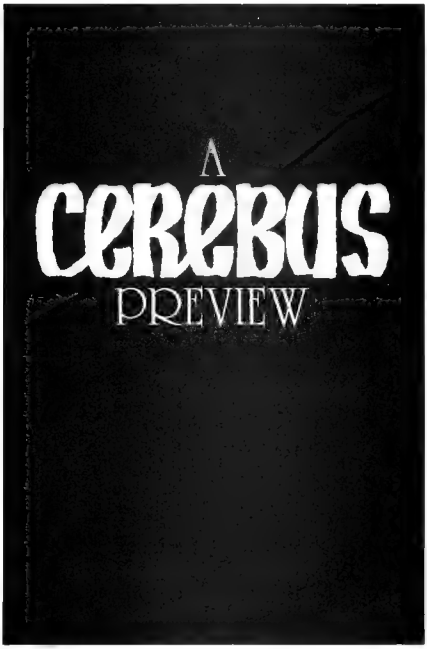
I've often been asked why I call myself "The Ranger". Perhaps it seems appropriate, perhaps it's fitting. I don't really have an answer. One friend described it as fitting because I have a way with plants and animals that's almost eerie. Another said it's because I wear a lot of green and black. I don't know.

Not too much else today — except for the fact that now every 30 seconds, a young teenage girl (we're talking as early as 12) gets pregnant. Sick isn't it? And so very damn sad. 12! Gods! Babies having babies. Why don't people wake up? Oops — promised I wouldn't talk on this subject didn't I? Better shut my mouth.

At any rate, please drop me a line when you can. Please answer some of my last questions if you would. Okay?

As always, my best to you. Be good to yourself. Blessed be.

The Ranger
c/o Steven Cornell
Oakland, CA
USA 94611



Here it is. My twenty-four hour comic produced in just a little over fifteen hours. What a rush. Seriously, if you are a cartoonist you have to give it a try. Makes you feel as if you have the strength of ten Grinches plus two. I'd like to dedicate it to Audrey (whose phone number I got and never used, which prompted the first few pages), Angela (whose hair I used), Gerhard (because doing a 'solo album' is always going to be a bit offensive no matter how innocent the intention), Monique (for not interrupting) Eric (for the black hash) and the Adolph Coors company for the sustenance around 12:30 a.m.

Oh, and to Lil Reid for the carrot cake because man does not live by Coors alone. Thanks, grandma.

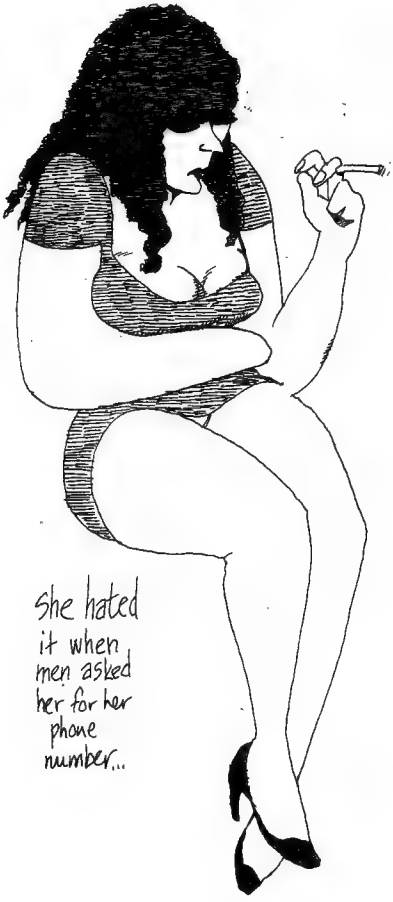
BIGGER BLACKER

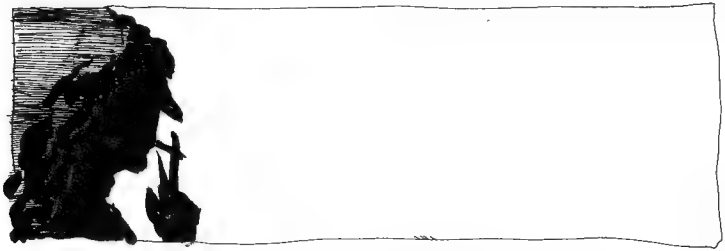
by
SIM

11 : 30 AM
10·26·90

to

2 : 45 AM
10·27·90


she hated
it when
men asked
her for her
phone
number...



If she gave it to them and they didn't call...

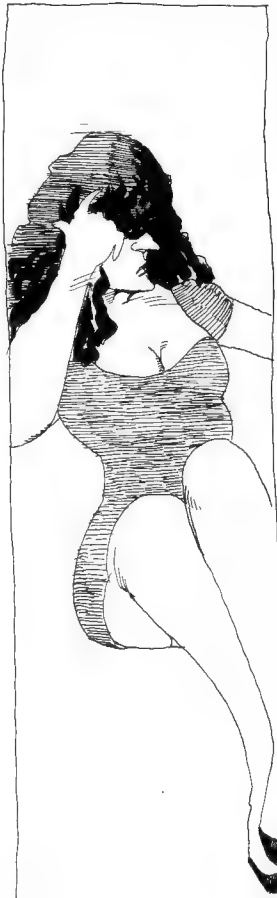
she felt un-wanted

Especially if she hadn't wanted them to call

If she gave it to them and she did want them to call

and they didn't call

she felt un-wanted and un-appealing



If they called the next day, she thought they were 'desperate'

If they didn't call for two days, she thought they were being 'aloof'

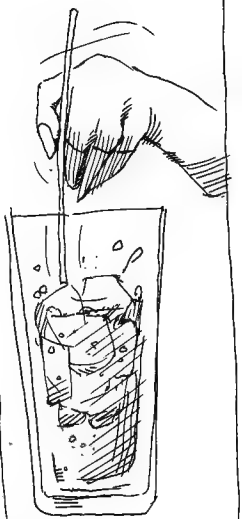
If they didn't call for three days, she thought they were being 'mean'

If they didn't call for a week she thought they were 'jerks'

If they didn't call for six months, she was afraid she was 'cheap looking'

If they phone to ask her out and she doesn't want to go out with them, she hates it when they ask about another night ... and another night and another night because they force her to sound 'rude'

If they phone to ask her out and she wants to go out with them she hates it when they don't ask her out for another night because it makes her think that they think that she's 'unavailable'



She hated men who were shy, because she thought they were 'weak'

She hated men who were out-going because she thought they were 'too dominant'

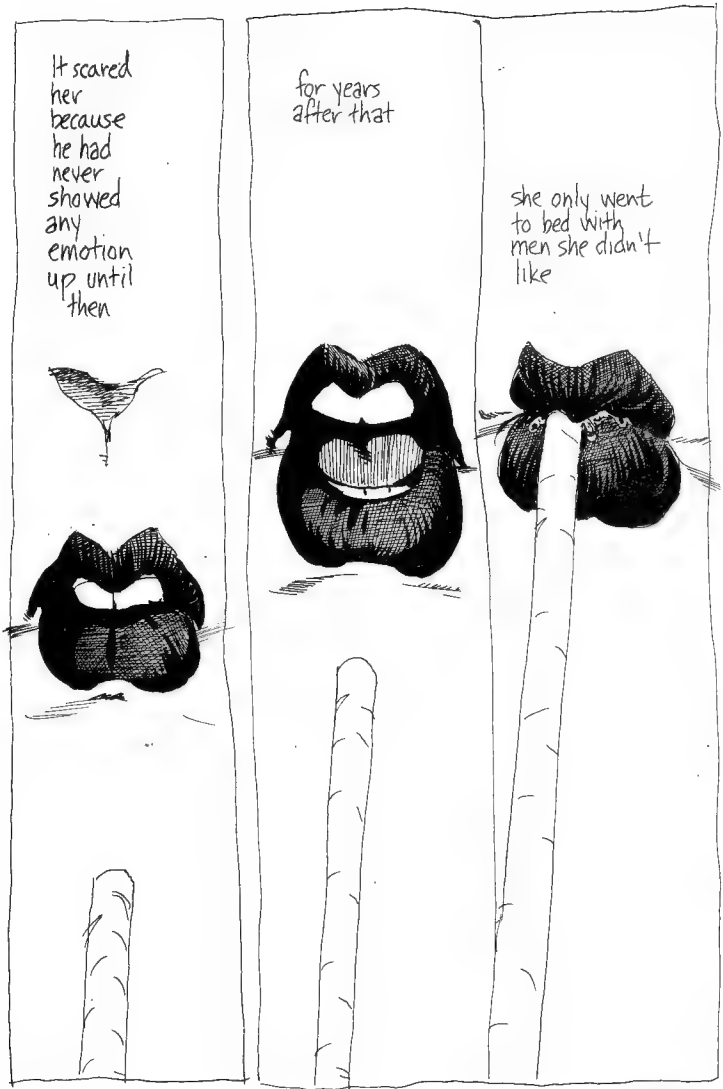
She lived with a guy once
SEVEN.

She had made him promise to never leave her

And he promised.

When she left him

he cried.


It scared her because he had never showed any emotion up until then
for years after that
she only went to bed with men she didn't like

One of them asked her to marry him.

She didn't know for sure if she would or *not* until she saw the engagement ring

then she knew

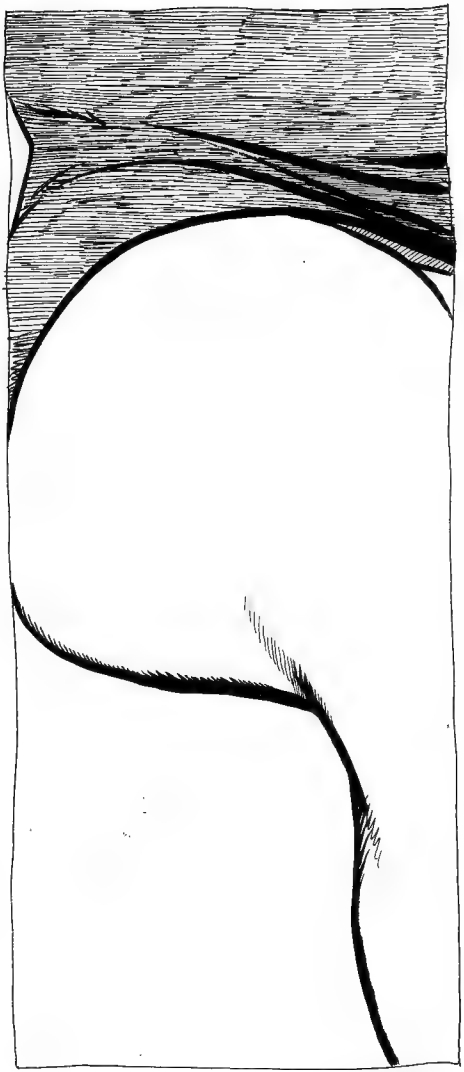
On their six-month wedding anniversary, she told him she didn't want to sleep with him any more....

she told him he made her flesh crawl.

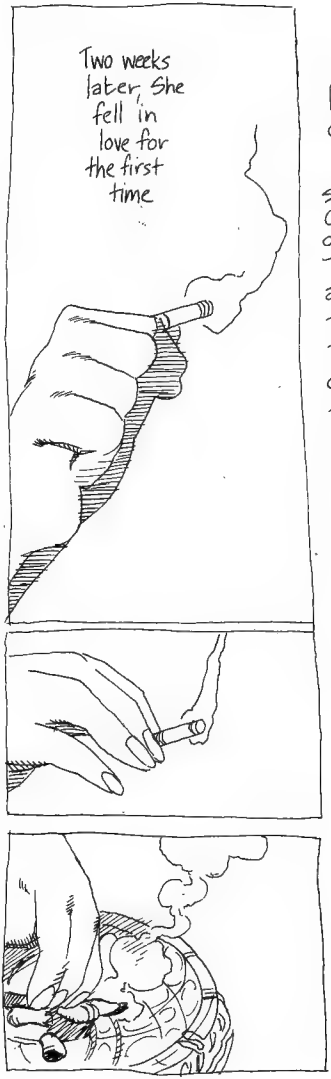
He wasn't *happy* but he agreed because he loved her (or so he *said*).

he didn't even cry.

A year later, he asked her for a divorce so he could marry someone *else*.



She filed a counter-suit and got the six bedroom house, a sports' car and two hundred thousand dollars in a lump sum



He sold the house to buy cocaine

smashed the car into a guard rail

and lost the two hundred thousand dollars at the race track.

When the money was all gone and he was packing his bag.

He called her a fat ugly bitch.

It had been months since someone had asked for her phone number.
months.

She wasn't fat.
not yet anyway
The only ones who bought her drinks now were paunchy, middle-aged business-men.
one drink
maybe two...
...depending

always
now
depending

Like the Two Over By The Door when she came in... leering at her... undressing her with their
...

They must have known she'd never give them her phone number

Pay the phone BILL NEXT MONTH

MUST have
ALREADY
USED some
of it
5
10
TEN DOLLARS DIX

JUST remember the TEST results

YOU
ARE
pregnant
fer sher
SOON!
SOON

SOON I'll never have to be ALONE again
ever....

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